Exploding the Mechanism of Mind

INTELLIGENCE BEYOND THOUGHT

Dada Gavand

tells his life story

INTELLIGENCE BEYOND THOUGHT

Exploding the Mechanism of Mind

An Autobiographical Journey

by

Dada Gavand

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OFFERING...

To the earnest seekers of the world who are attempting to discover the mystery of Life, I dedicate this book.

AN APPEAL WITH LOVE

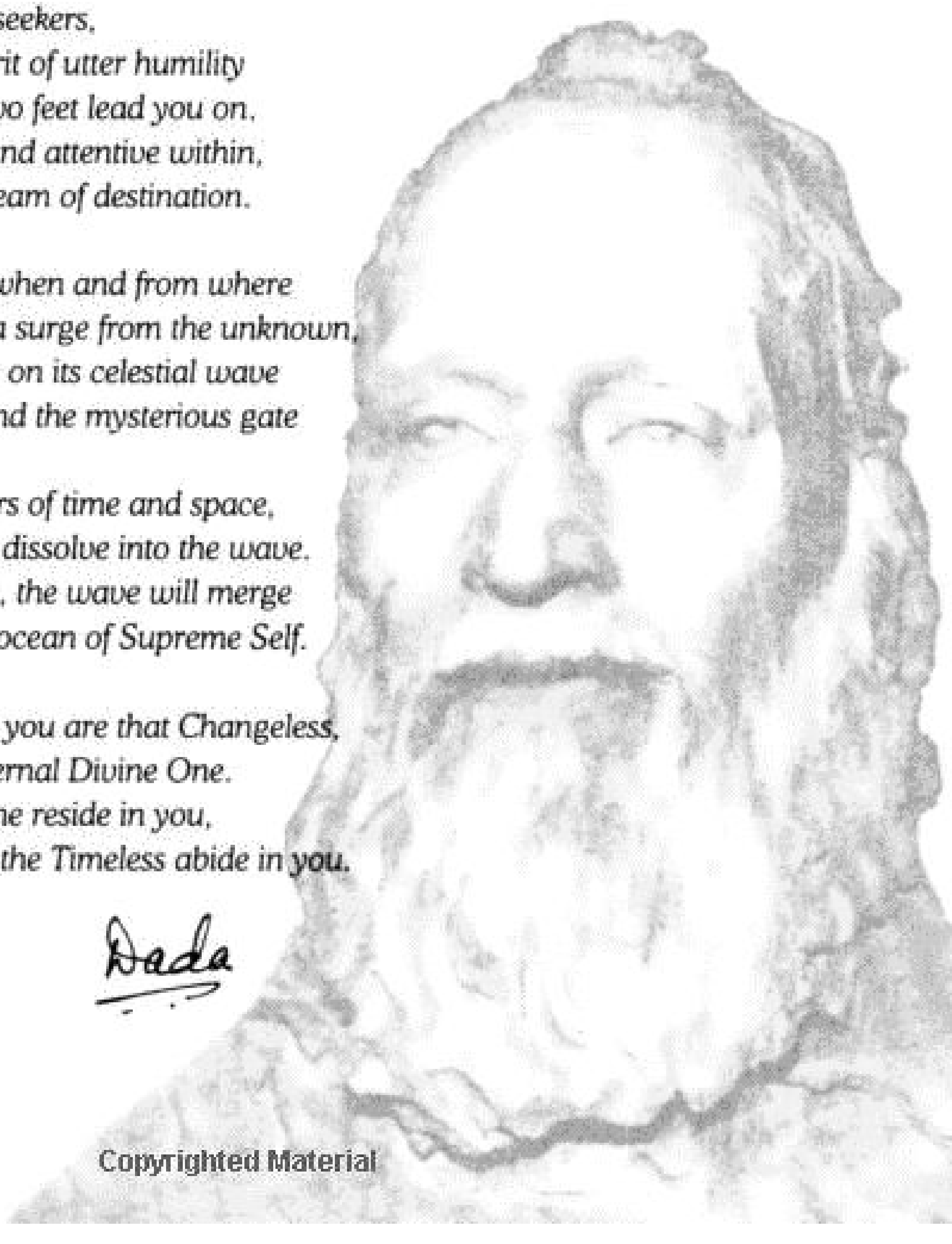
Oh seekers,
Walk in the spirit of utter humility
Let your own two feet lead you on,
Remain aware and attentive within,
Without any dream of destination.

Then who knows when and from where
A high tide will arrive, a surge from the unknown,
To give you a ride on its celestial wave
And take you beyond the mysterious gate

Across the frontiers of time and space,
Where the drop will dissolve into the wave.
Then, mysteriously, the wave will merge
With the boundless ocean of Supreme Self.

You are that Supreme, you are that Changeless,
You are the Eternal Divine One.
Let that Divine reside in you,
May that experience of the Timeless abide in you.

Dada



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Foreword

Throughout history there have been those unique individuals who upset the societal status quo, who poke us to see ourselves more closely and prod us to go beyond, who rock the boat of complacency and question the reasons why, who prick our sense of accepted values and buzz at the bastions of tradition.

These disturbers have invariably been on the leading edge of important change, be it political, psychological, social or religious. They were the visionaries who grasped the next needed thread to be woven into the fabric of mankind's march on earth.

Dada Gavand is such an individual. His living experience of the explosion of mind is now humanity's leading edge. He doesn't mince words in describing this powerful event, what led up to it in his own life, how this totally different energy transformed his brain and body in its own way, and how this explosion brings 'the peace that passes understanding' which humanity has sought for so long.

We know that one universal theme has consistently permeated the histories of all civilizations, religions, philosophies and psychology: the mysterious quest for enlightenment to know the ultimate Truth, God, spiritual transformation, self-understanding, inner peace -- it has many names.

This deep-seated yearning to find true meaning in life and to transcend mundane existence crosses many races, societies and socio-economic strata. To discover the missing link between the mind and inner spirit becomes urgent and vastly more important than intellectual knowledge, pleasures and acquisitions.

A number of rare individuals have risen up to meet the challenge and grapple with the psychological barriers to peace and fulfillment, to experience Oneness/Divinity/Enlightenment. Their first-hand understanding has often been handed down over generations. But rarely has much detail been shared regarding the personal experience of enlightenment.

Many books are being written on the subject, yet few are authored by individuals who have themselves experienced this inner cataclysm.

Intelligence Beyond Thought is the personal account of the saga that resulted in this transformation. Finally, Dada shares this first-hand experience in rare detail, describing the inner processes that culminated in a breakthrough to another dimension.

Breaking exciting new ground in spiritual / psychological literature, Dada actually shares the secret of how the event of enlightenment takes place! That is the unique and astoundingly important contribution of this autobiographical journey, not revealed in any other writing on the subject.

Dada's amazing account describes the frustrations, disillusionment, despair, yearning and upheaval, which led to a mountaintop hut, far removed from family and society. There, alone, with no distractions or escapes, Dada grappled face-to-face with the psychological mechanism of mind, the internal operating system of man that dictates every thought and movement.

He describes his months of solitude, the cauldron of inner watching without letup, the mystery of dissolving thought, and how the energy gathered thereby finally leads to a powerful explosion. **Intelligence Beyond Thought** is perhaps the only description of the psychological processes and stages of energy release and buildup that ultimately produce the critical-mass energy necessary for this quantum-leap breakthrough of consciousness.

Such an explosion shatters the crystallized psychological structure of mind and brings contact with an energy and intelligence of a different, unseen dimension. Only this radical event allows man to experience new energy from a hitherto unknown source beyond thought and mind. He describes how it enters the body, acts on the brain and organs at the cellular level, with its own intelligence and mysterious movement, coming and going at will in order to make the body and nervous system capable of sustaining its high-voltage flow.

This new energy has the capacity to wipe out the genetic past and conditioning, heal illnesses and physical and mental problems. It can transform relationships, society, and mankind. A universal human being emerges, free of self-centered attitudes, and from cultural and psychological conditioning. He then is the embodiment of love, intelligence and compassion, which is what humanity has been searching for throughout history.

Dada talks frankly about transformation as a radical step, not a tame process of gradual adjustments, intellectual theories of growth, or mindful disciplines. He questions the easy steps and remedies, the spiritual and psychological words repeated and quoted so freely, the behavioral amendments that basically do little at a deeper level.

In his life of frankness shines the adventurous spirit of a man who had wealth, prestige, comfort and stability, yet who gave it all up in his passion to discover the spiritual gem awaiting within.

Intelligence Beyond Thought impels the reader to look entirely within himself to see the relentlessly chattering mind, the mental mechanism constantly generating thoughts, behaviors and endless chains of problems-repairs-problems. Dada shows how this psychological structure dominates our energy for its own survival, dictating our every move; that man is in fact its captive!

Dada brings the reader to the point of deeply sensing the urgency of this change now, not only to bring a sense of peace and relaxation to oneself on a daily basis, but for humanity and the future of the world. The vivid details of his life jolt us into enquiring whether we, too, are enslaved and just stagnating. Perhaps we must rise up in revolt to face the inner dictator and take a revolutionary step.

This book does not lay out a path nor is it a guide. Rather it is a gauntlet to society: pointing to an energy, intelligence and way of being that transcends everything we currently know. It produces a revolutionary human being with the power to revolutionize society. Dada's life is a living testament to how this new-dimensional energy itself leads to actions that are intelligent, benevolent and creative.

He is a man who, despite profound change and cosmic awareness, has lived simply, humbly, seeks no fame or riches, and has not proclaimed from pulpits in charismatic public style. Dada is a teacher surely, but not a 'guru'. At 88, his health, youthful appearance and mysterious energy are amazing examples of how this change can affect the body and brain.

This gentle powerhouse has touched the lives of thousands of persons through his penetrating way of giving talks and personal interviews, staying in countless homes on his tours and working on various creative projects, thus enriching those friends with this energy and wisdom. The new-dimensional energy that he is, affects all those who are open and receptive, even those who may be somewhat resisting it!

But revolutionary he surely is, because nothing can remain quite the same after he touches one's life. One then starts looking seriously within at the chattering, conditioned and clever dictator in our own head. Dada playfully pesters until we glimpse our folly. He craftily questions our comfortable mind-set until nothing is quite comfortable again. He muddies up our mechanical meditations, which may be lulling us into sanctified stagnation.

Dada is a mixed blessing, incredibly different, scarily knowing, powerfully close, great fun, our very best friend, our worst heckler. He is caring and sensitive, yet his words prick deeply. He is down-home and approachable, but downright hard on our ingrained grooves.

The change that Dada reflects and discusses is not merely temporary peacefulness, not a new way of meditation nor a polished path to bliss. The mind/thought mechanism becomes totally different, explodes, as he calls it, allowing the brain as a tool to be used by the intelligent energy that is Life/Love/Cosmic/Divine.

Have we seen any fundamental change in mankind or society? Rather, haven't we seen the consistent failures of all forms of litany, whether New Age or old tradition? The world is careening toward catastrophe, with mankind creating problems faster than it can solve them. We blame anything and anyone. This is true from our own household level to that of nations and the world. We are just not doing a very good job given the thinking tools that we have, even after centuries of trying!

Now science and psychologists are peering closer and closer at the mind in the test tubes, brain scans and genetic codes. Everyone is still trying to figure out what makes mankind tick so abnormally. Dada is a man who has investigated to the core of the mind, dissolved its conditioned and genetic domination, and experienced the profound transformation and new energy flow which itself will intelligently and benevolently guide us in daily and worldly living.

It is incredibly exciting to consider this possibility, which is right under our noses. Also intimidating perhaps. But it is really very necessary, now, not to back away from this door to profound inner peace. The world desperately needs the intelligence of this new energy.

The secret of transformation shared in this book is the cutting edge information for sincere seekers, psychologists and explorers of science and religion, and for all genuinely questioning individuals. Indeed, the book is less a personal life story and more of a treatise on a radical inner revolution. **Intelligence Beyond Thought** is a beacon to the breakthrough that humanity urgently needs in the precarious 21st century! We thank Dada for a lifetime of sharing himself, his vision, and that energy.

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January 2006

A Word from the Author . . .

When I was traveling on my lecture tour in Hawaii in 1991, I came across a small typewritten booklet of maybe fifty pages, sitting casually on the table in the home of my host. The title greatly surprised me: "The Mysterious Story of Dada".

This booklet described my living in solitude on Sajjangad Mountain and the mysterious explosion I experienced there. In fact, I had never narrated that story for a booklet! The written material was collected by some friends, gleaned from different places and comments, including an interview with an Indian scholar who had written about me. The account was fragmented and incomplete, but it was a sincere attempt.

I began to see that these honest seekers were very curious about my intense living in solitude and the mysterious mind-quake that occurred. Since then many friends have urged me to write about the whole story of leaving home and my internal adventure. I was not keen on writing this history as a mystery. But now, as I have known many seekers and their honest struggles, I feel like giving a detailed account in order to convey to them what this challenge of radical transformation of consciousness actually entails.

Many people have wanted to know this personal account of my life, especially what made me leave my wealthy, cozy home, and what exactly I did in my life of aloneness in the forest. So, to honor their request, this book comes as an autobiographical account of the explosion of mind and the journey beyond, to reveal the magnitude of this challenge of spiritual endeavor.

Although I have narrated the significant events in my life in detail, I do not want readers to look upon them as pointers to a standard process, formula or technique which may be adopted or emulated. Creativity is ever fresh and new; it never repeats itself. In Nature, no two trees are exactly alike. The shape and size, the bend and turn of each tree are uniquely different.

Each seeker, too, is unique and must go his own distinct way. Only, he needs to have a vision and passion with a spirit of fearlessness. Without the spirit of adventure, he cannot discover the 'spirit' within. Also, he has to remain open and innocent to receive and welcome the will of the benevolent Timeless.

All religions were born primarily to emphasize this fact. However, mind has turned the fact into a philosophy. Truth is verily destroyed when it becomes an idea. The time has come to see that information and knowledge are merely a collection of ideas from the past; they hinder real experiencing and understanding.

To understand anything as it is, one has to make direct contact with it, to meet it with one's total energy. The mind-idea activity has to remain absolutely quiet, all thoughts and memories have to dissolve, for only in the silent state of utter thought-less-ness does understanding happen. To be in the state of not-knowing without the interference of thought is the highest art of knowing. There knowing and experiencing become one.

To understand the working of one's own mind is an uphill task. At the outset, the seeker has to watch his mind through the mind itself, as he does not have any other way. The mind does everything possible to hinder this watching as it does not want to give up its hold on the seeker. However, the seeker has to continue to watch at this crucial juncture. As his watching intensifies, there comes a point when suddenly, most inadvertently, he becomes aware of the watcher itself. Even the 'knower' comes into the field of awareness.

The sprouting of this novel element in consciousness is a major step forward as it adds a new dimension to his perception. This unique perception further broadens his span of awareness. Such wide, polyangular awareness, within and without at the same time, does not involve any narrowing of focus on one or more things or events. He who earnestly moves onwards in his inner domain with such all-round vigilant awareness, and with all his Life-force, is bound to have a breakthrough.

Taking a U-turn and watching oneself is not meant for just a chosen few. It is available to all sincere seekers of truth and spiritual understanding. But it is the mind that keeps harping on the 'impossibility' of the challenge because it fears its own dissolution through such intense watchfulness in the present without reference to past knowledge. It abhors the quiet state of thought-lessness and not-knowing. It always wants certainty and moves happily from the known to the known.

The fact, however, is that the whole of life is an unfoldment of the unknown. The seeker has to be always eager to welcome the unknown. The beauty of spirituality is in remaining in the state of not-knowing. Such a state results from the faith that Life energy will sustain one, lead one by the hand. Then one has the strength to cross any hurdle.

The seeker has to understand this fact, stop dodging the real work of watchful self-awareness and begin in full earnest. When objective internal watchfulness becomes a passion, there is sure to be an opening.

Truth is not the monopoly of any religious tradition or country. It is a universal intelligence, a cosmic creation. It is the heritage of human beings anywhere in the world. Spiritual pursuit is the means to bring a man in touch with his own inner being, the latent divinity within. And Nature assists in its own way, bringing about a mysterious alchemy of events and energy, to elevate a human being to a new-dimensional consciousness. This alchemy may astound psychologists and brain researchers!

Oddly enough, one of the purposes of writing this autobiography is to show the ultimate limitation of reading and the futility of depending upon words and ideas to experience the truth. Truth is not understood through words, and wisdom is not experienced through ideas and logic. Any deep understanding is the result of innate silence. Such silence lies beyond the frontiers of thoughts and words.

Can the reader go through the words of this book with silence in himself? Can he look beyond the sentence to gather the sense and essence of the statement? It is worth a try.

Although this is not a comprehensive autobiography of my entire life, it relates some events – those ripples in life that helped the drifting log to touch the shore.

Dada

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January 2006

ONE

THE UPHEAVAL

Ending a Life of Respectable Stagnation

Nothing is more prized perhaps in traditional Indian society than a spectacular wedding. It is the event of a lifetime, with memories to treasure into old age. In any country, the marriage of two people is generally an important occasion full of intense hopes, fantasies and expectations for the future. In this new beginning the couple starts a fresh life, leaving childhood behind and imagining adult romantic dreams. It is the crest of a wave, a high point of optimism about a lifetime of happiness.

Everyone wants to ride this momentous wave and be part of the rising tide of anticipation. A wedding brings with it a great surge of enthusiasm, imagination and expectations. It is an important milestone in a person's life, and these feelings of hope create high spirits and unbridled emotions. The exuberance around the event is contagious, and everyone gets swept up in the wave.

This celebratory atmosphere permeated our household in the summer of 1955, in Thane, near Mumbai, as my younger brother Ram's marriage drew near. We all had to attend to a multitude of tasks and happily took part in the festive preparations. Specially hired staff came to assist our cooks with the elaborate wedding feast. New clothes, the finest jewelry and a playful excitement sparkled in the house. Variety and abundance was the style of weddings in those days. This grand occasion would last three days!

My married sisters, their children and other close relatives came to stay with us three days before the wedding date, so the house was full to the brim with family members, food and ceremonial gaiety. The guests were very joyful, noisy and excited. Everyone shared the spirit of jubilation and anticipation.

My brother Ram, twelve years younger than myself, typified the new groom, full of excitement and plans. He happily participated in choosing his wedding suit and the traditional Indian adornments. Our relatives and friends further heightened his enthusiasm and expectations.

Our father Madhavrao Gavand had died many years earlier. Hence, at the time of Ram's wedding, when I was 38, I had to play the role of senior family member and host. Ram was the last sibling to be married, and I had to be involved in matters of planning and implementation. I worked on every aspect to organize the ceremonies and supervise the preparations. My responsibilities included inviting relatives and friends, overseeing the many wedding details, and making everyone feel welcome and honored.

Since the death of my father in 1935 when I was only 18 years old, I had been carrying the weight of all the family duties. I was born in Mumbai, in 1917 and was my parents' first child. As the eldest son, I inherited the responsibility of taking care of my mother Kashibai Gavand, five sisters and brother, in addition to running my father's business. With dedication and in good spirit I accepted these duties, and also met the obligation of supporting my siblings until they got married.

This wedding brought me to the point of having fulfilled all these obligations to my brother and sisters. Thus, after three days of intense and hectic festivities, when the grand event of this final marriage ended, I experienced a great relief. The sixth and last marriage had finally taken place. At last I felt unburdened of most of my appointed tasks.

For quite a while I had been feeling that the time had come for me to find a new direction for my own future and way of life. Although outwardly I continued to be committed to my family duties, I carried within me the yearning for a more meaningful life. Lately this urge had become very strong. For many years my true objective lay in discovering something more than temporary enjoyments and excitements. I began to see very clearly that my everyday life was mostly a glorified rut consisting of one mundane task after another.

Over the years, I had gone to listen to the great sages talk about another dimension of life, about freedom, transformation, creativity, a timeless reality wherein lies peace and fulfillment. They spoke eloquently about an inward tranquility which comes about in freedom from external attachments. All this sounded much better and more important than anything I was seeing in my own current life or in anyone else's in society.

So I began pondering about this mysterious and unknown aspect of life – what is this peace and where does it lie? Is it possible to discover that hidden, spiritual dimension?

Up until that point I had put those interests aside, focusing on my family duties and business instead. But I saw very clearly what a burden it all was. I needed freedom from my business, family responsibilities and social commitments in order to explore if life might hold something more important, a deeper fulfillment.

The day after the marriage ceremony, another grand dinner heralded the formal close of the wedding celebration. Late that night, when much of the excitement had ended, I went to my room to relax. Although exhausted from the hectic work of the last few days, I was not able to have a restful sleep. So much turmoil churned within me – questions about life, its nature, its functioning and purpose – all this started stirring up strongly. Outwardly I participated in this joyous family occasion, but my mind had become very introverted, forcing me to face many probing and serious questions.

I sensed a great void in me. Engulfed by an incredible emptiness, I felt that I did not know what to do or how to proceed. I had definitely lost all interest in the so-called family life that I currently led, with its routines, pursuits, ambitions and expectations. I appeared to be passing through a great, deep chasm. That emptiness made me a little nervous, and it caused an intense inwardness. Because I had lost all interest in making money and in social work, seeing them as mundane, I decided to terminate such a meaningless way of existence.

At last I realized that this phase of my life had come to an end. Having completed my responsibilities towards my family and to those around me, I pondered: what next? What direction should my life take? I had refrained from marriage because I did not feel it would bring me fulfillment. Rather, it seemed to be a glorified trap, which would be a hindrance in my attempt to explore the deeper significance of life. The bondage and burden of marriage responsibilities were evident all around me.

The question kept coming up within me, 'Is there any way to find an unburdened way of living, free from traditional and psychological compulsions, attachments and emotional entanglements?'

Not only did my brother's marriage prompt all these questions, but also because of my listening, reading and pondering over life, a clarity of understanding had begun to take shape.

I saw that my family and cultural tradition had themselves created the image of what I should be and what I should do, and I identified fully with that fabricated image of myself. Over a period of time, the cultivated image had become a real entity, 'me.' My family, being rich and respectable, had created a strong family identity. I felt I must keep this image intact and fulfill my role in it. This left me with no freedom to lead a way of life other than what that image demanded. I saw the constraints and compulsions in which I had got myself trapped – by my self-created image of 'me'.

A social image of me had also been formed. I wanted to do humanitarian public work, so I had to maintain my social prestige as well as my family image. At the young age of 23, I was elected member of the Thane municipal board by public vote. I remember how this election gave me a social standing and made me feel elated. As member I sincerely did my best to fulfill my responsibilities in the public sphere also. But social work did not bring me any real satisfaction.

Social work done by Municipal members was supposed to be a means of reducing social inequality and inculcating civic sense, but it never turned out like that. There was hardly any significant improvement in living conditions. Reforms got introduced and laws passed, but the only thing that changed a little was people's outward behavioral patterns. It only superficially affected social modes and manners. The man within remained unaffected – a self-centered person, interested in his own gain, prestige, security – the same calculating man that he always was.

I observed similar things happening with my close relatives and friends. Even though they talked about change, reform and spirituality, they still followed the age-old traditions. Obsessed with their own routines and patterns, they seldom made a deep change of any sort either. Choosing new patterns and modifying behavior may have effected some superficial or temporary alterations, but it had not brought about a real transformation in their psyche or lives. I saw that the inner person is not really affected by changing the environment. Society and family go hand in hand, to condition and control man, leaving him with little room for change.

Basically, I seriously wanted to see if there could be a radical change in man, a transformation from inside out. I clearly saw that this play we call living, be it social or familial, is a very superficial activity. The limitations of this kind of self-centered way of existence had become painfully evident. I found that I was losing contact with the type of life I had been leading up to this point. The emotional hold that my family relations, business commitments and social prestige exerted over me had gradually loosened. All these attachments had diminished considerably.

That third night of the festivities I remained alone and awake in my bedroom, seriously pondering and questioning – 'now what am I going to do'?

It seemed to me that there was no room for me in this kind of society, not even in my family. With this deepening perception, which made me question the established norms and family traditions, I found it difficult to discuss this matter with anyone in the family. I could not openly talk about it to my mother or to my elderly uncles. But in the depths of my being, I felt clearly that this chapter of my life had come to an end.

Groping in the darkness of uncertainty, I could not plan anymore. Frequently and intensely I pondered over all these issues and questions. In reality I did not know what my next move would be. Now that the wedding tasks were nearly completed, I felt a huge relief. This brought a unique feeling of gratitude, humility and inwardness. Yet there was so much turmoil going on within me that again, I could not sleep that entire night.

The next day, I had to make all the wedding-related payments. The invited relatives remained in the house, where much excitement and festivity continued. My emotional involvement with these activities was decidedly on a low key. A new spirit of objectivity and aloofness made me perceive the family activities and guests differently. I participated and performed my jobs, but as if from a great distance, with a thin thread of connection. Although I loved my mother, sisters and brother, that bond, too, had weakened. Instead, I felt detached from everything happening around me.

Also, I saw that emotions such as anger, hate, love, joy, pain – qualities that we label 'good' as well as 'bad' – all co-exist in life, so one hardly has any deep peace or genuine happiness. The pushes and pulls and the highs and lows all go on silently and constantly. It seemed that to indulge in physical pleasures and emotional excitements is the one main objective of everyone's life.

Through the deaths of family members, especially my father and my two uncles, I had seen how living inevitably ends in fear and uncertainty. Despite many achievements and pleasures over the years, man still experiences the fear of dying, with uncertainty and sadness leading up to it. I questioned whether I would like to lead this kind of existence, to follow this age-old pattern and face the end of my days on earth feeling fearful, bitter and sad like everybody else.

What is the net result of our life-long struggles and striving? I questioned whether the purpose of living is only to find temporary pleasure and to avoid pain. What is life's deeper meaning? Isn't there a more significant mission? Can there be more than just the superficial activities prompted by desires, ambition and greed?

It seemed to me that the main goal of man is to create a cocoon for himself, a secure dwelling for self-indulgent play. Is the only purpose of being on earth to create a shelter around oneself and then lead a life of stagnation? Or, isn't it rather to break through this stagnation and discover unbounded living and true inner peace? Can one find a truly spiritual basis for living? *Is there a way to be like a seed that shatters its own hard cover to sprout a new life hidden within?*

These themes I probed intensely. Although cozy and comfortable in my home, I saw that it simply amounted to a respectable stagnation.

The internal churning went on and on about my current way of living and my new insights, the urge to find a deeper, more meaningful life. This pondering resulted in showing me that the traditional bond of marriage, with all its commitments, attachments and compulsions, would not be a very appealing choice for me. I saw the silken threads of this web of perpetual bondage.

Freedom from my present situation remained the only honest way open to me. To honor this quest became my sole alternative.

Then I had to face the new questions that came up: 'If I am seriously interested in this kind of psychological or spiritual enquiry, where and how can I carry it out? Is my current environment conducive to it? Or will I have to be totally on my own?'

After all this deep churning and pondering, I decided to leave the house, to go away and be free from family attachments and social compulsions. I had no clear idea about the next step or what I would do. The strong urge to end this current pattern of existence became my main focus. If I were to be honest with my understanding and yearnings, now was the right time to act upon them. This was my chance for the discovery of life, the discovery of something more profound but as yet unknown!

Then the idea of solitude and being alone came to me. In order to take a serious look to explore all the deeper issues, perhaps I would need to have no distractions at all, and spend all my time and energy alone with myself. Consequently, I had to make myself free.

Honoring this perception, I decided to leave home and venture into a new life of solitude. This became the direction and the pointer: to honor the challenge of discovery in aloneness.

Once I understood the necessity of severing all ties with my family and going away, something in me started to aspire to fly in the sky. An unknown force created a vision of flight and freedom. This aspiration became stronger and stronger. I had to respect my yearning and fulfill my vision. There was no other choice.

On the fourth day of the wedding festivities, I knew that I must leave. Some of the guests still remained in the house, but I had lost all interest in them.

I packed a small bag, a few clothes and a mat to sleep on. It was not an intellectual decision or determination, but an instinctive perception that brought about my actions. Once I saw the limitations and futility of my present life, I had to act. Yet I could not think or plan my future course. Instead, the deep perception itself propelled my actions.

I informed my mother that I would be going on a short vacation. She said that she understood how I probably needed a rest after all the hectic festivities. My mother, brother and sisters were accustomed to my going away periodically for my pondering and meditations. This time, they thought that after all my hard work during the wedding event, I would go away for a short while as usual. But I had a very different feeling this time within me.

I knew in my mind that I was leaving for good. I touched my mother's feet to pay my parting respects. She showed surprise at my action, wondering why I was behaving in this manner when I would be gone for only a short holiday. I had difficulty hiding my strong emotions from her. My true feeling was that I would be gone for a very long time before seeing her again, perhaps forever. I took a deep look at my nearest and dearest relatives gathered round me to say good-bye, and walked out the door with a heavy heart.

Although I had no idea where I would go, I left. I had no agenda or destination, no plan of action. Living became a momentum of happening without any conscious plan. From that point onward, I started riding the wave of the unknown.

TWO

WHERE NO ONE CAN FIND ME

A Plunge into the Unknown

I left my home and walked directly towards the railway station. For some time I sat on the bench there, watching the crowds with unseeing eyes, wondering about where to proceed from here. India is such a vast country with all its temples, religious sites and pilgrimage centers. I had already visited many of these. But now it was difficult for me to decide where to go. I needed a place where I would not know anyone, and where no one would recognize me. Especially, I did not want my family or friends to find out where I was staying. Most of all, my burning need was to go into solitude for a long period.

Soon came an announcement on the loudspeaker that the train from Mumbai to Pune was running a little late, and that it would arrive at the station half an hour past the scheduled time. Hearing the announcement, but without actually thinking about it, I just took that opportunity and purchased a ticket to Pune. Soon the train arrived and I got into a nearly empty compartment. Not many people boarded, so I sat comfortably in a corner seat.

I felt like an empty bucket, drained of thoughts and devoid of my usual busy ways. The journey to Pune took almost five hours. For quite some time I remained silent, empty and numb. Then after a while my mind started working. I began thinking about my family, my mother and brother, and how I had actually left them. A feeling of deep sorrow swept over me, and I started to weep. I actually sobbed aloud, with tears rolling down my cheeks. All the years of responsible family life had finally reached a breaking point, and I felt that something within me had begun to dissolve. The past connections and bonds of security were loosening as I ventured into the wilderness.

This uprooting event caused an intense sorrow to surge within me. The grief left me very sensitive, and I felt humble and tender, almost like a child. The thought of going away from my mother and family made me uncomfortable and restless. This intense emotional upheaval went on throughout my five-hour journey. Although I sat near the window looking outside, nothing out there registered inside me. I don't think I talked with any other passenger during the entire trip. Due to my inner emotional turmoil, I was basically pensive and inward only.

At last the train arrived at Pune station. Everybody else got off quickly, but I stayed seated. I do not know how long I remained there because I sat in a dazed state. Finally, I came to my senses when a train guard came shouting that everybody had to get off since the train would now be shunted to a sidetrack. On hearing this, I got off hurriedly and sat on a bench with my few things next to me. There I remained until a porter came and asked me where I wanted to go, offering to help with my luggage. I replied that I didn't need any help, that I myself would carry my own burden hereafter. I remained there for some time longer, still not sure what to do, my mind in turmoil. After a while, I realized that I had to go somewhere. But where?

I started walking out of the railway station. Right in front of me, on the other side of the road, I saw the big board of a 'dharamsala'. Traditionally, a dharamsala is a traveler's resting place where one can stay free of cost for a few days. I thought I would stay there that one night. When I went to the office and asked for a room, to my surprise they told me that for just one person no separate rooms were available. Single travelers all went to a dormitory, they explained, and the separate rooms were reserved for families only.

That was my first experience of staying in a common hall, sleeping amidst strangers. I felt irritated that I did not get a private room, that I would have to be in a dormitory with all the other single people. I saw how my ego got hurt by having to stay with them. This was not the usual accommodation or treatment for me. But I, this rich man, could not afford to go to a hotel now!

This experience made me realize that now I was an ordinary person, without much money or prestige. It showed me clearly that I was no longer a family person, but rather a single, solitary man. As such I had to adjust myself to this new situation. So I found myself a place in the corner of the dormitory and spread my mat to sit upon. There in that big hall, with strangers all around, I felt a bit nervous and very lonely.

Pune is a big city as well as pilgrim center. People from all over India go to Pune to visit its many religious temples. In the morning I woke up to the noise of the bustling city. I went out of the dormitory, found a spot to sit and spread out my small mat. There I remained, watching people from the dharamsala come and go, busy with their plans to visit temples. I sat alone, without any plan. I felt a great void, a vacuum within me. My mind slowed down, just observing everybody around me. I saw their focused activity, planned and purposeful movements, while I felt mentally and emotionally paralyzed.

Finally I realized I was hungry, and noticed it was time for breakfast. I opened the box of food which my dear mother had given me, enough to last for two or three days. I started to eat, and suddenly I became very emotional. The thought of my mother – that she would not be around me, serving me my food, that I would be eating all by myself from now on – the thought of being alone overwhelmed me. I found many people around me gathered in groups talking loudly and eating happily. Only I sat and ate alone.

Everything there seemed to be pointing to me saying, "You are no longer a family person or a social being. You are alone now." Thus began my journey of aloneness.

I stayed in the Pune dharamsala for three days, with no plan, no specific place to go to, no books to read. I felt lost. The inner turmoil continued, and so did the questioning, seeing my lack of direction, watching my ego getting offended by my change of status. I knew that at a dharamsala, pilgrims are generally allowed to stay for only a few days, so I kept wondering where I should go from there. Even though I remembered various quiet places, with all the facilities for seekers to carry out their spiritual practices, I felt sure that my family would eventually find me there and show up to persuade me to go back. My main concern continued to be: how to find a solitary place where no one would find me.

Finding the Right Place

On the third day I was supposed to leave the dharamsala, but I still did not have any idea about where to go from there. That morning, as I sat in the dormitory, a group of seven or more people came in hurriedly, sat nearby, and started talking loudly amongst themselves while taking their breakfast. They were discussing their plan to go to a mountain called Sajjangad, the 'samadhi' place or shrine of Swami Ramdas who lived three hundred years earlier. It is also a historic fort. The name and description of the place struck me, and suddenly I had a strong impulse to go there. A bus would leave at 10:00 that morning, and the group planned to go to Sajjangad on that bus.

Without much thought, I quickly gathered up my things and rushed to catch the same bus. When I reached the nearby bus station to buy a ticket, the line was already very long. The conductor himself issues the tickets and hands them out. While I waited in queue, he suddenly announced that no more seats were available since the bus was already full. The three or four passengers in line ahead of me, and I, all missed out on the tickets. The next bus would leave after five hours.

Greatly disappointed, we all left the queue and everyone dispersed. Again I became uncertain about what to do. I sat down on a bench nearby feeling a little sad. After maybe five minutes of sitting there, suddenly the bus conductor came directly to me and asked, "Do you want to go to Sajjangad?" Very surprised, I replied yes. He told me to go and sit on seat number four on the bus, because the person who had reserved that seat had not shown up. I could not believe my eyes and ears. Suddenly a seat became available for me! Truly I had no right to the seat because there had been people ahead of me in the queue. But to my amazement the conductor approached me directly and offered the seat to me.

The bus ride lasted four or five hours. The whole time my head churned with more questions and turmoil. Still I felt quite excited about going to that particular mountaintop. There would be no one who knew me in that remote spot, and my family would not discover my whereabouts.

Soon I got into a conversation with some of the people sitting around me. Looking at my city clothes they became curious and asked why I wanted to go to the remote temple of Sajjangad. They told me that I had missed the connecting bus to reach the mountain, so I could not go there directly. Surprisingly, they suggested that I stay at their house in Satara city overnight and then continue on the bus to Sajjangad the next day.

Although I was a complete stranger to them, they offered me a place to stay! Amazed by their hospitality, I accepted the invitation. They graciously gave me dinner, and we sat around talking. These traditional and conservative people were curious about me, and after dinner they asked again what I planned to do on the mountain. They said that I did not look like the pilgrims who usually go up there.

I replied that I did not really have a plan about what to do, but I felt the need to be away for some time from the work routine and my hectic activities. I described my business, family and social connections, and explained that now I seriously questioned my life of meaningless routine and constant compulsive pressures. I had heard sages talk about internal peace, wisdom and freedom, and had read many books on the subject. Now, I said, I wanted to ponder over all of this on my own, and thought that perhaps this holy mountaintop would be a good place for my search and meditation. They seemed somewhat surprised but also sympathetic toward this urge that drove me.

They gave me breakfast in the morning and then took me to the bus-stand around 9 am. From there I caught the bus to Sajjangad. Thus, in less than an hour, I arrived at the foot of the historic mountain. From this final bus stop, pilgrims had to walk the rest of the way up. The distance was about 3 to 4 kms. Porters immediately converged on me, offering to carry my bags and practically snatching my baggage. But I said, "No, thank you, I will carry my own luggage; I will not burden anyone with it." And I picked up all my things.

While walking up the steep mountain I began to feel the actual weight of my baggage. Not accustomed to this kind of heavy physical work, I normally would have hired a porter to do this for me. The climb up proved to be very difficult since it was a high mountain, and I had to stop and rest several times during the long ascent. It was summer time and the sun blazed hot overhead, making the climb all the more difficult.

Most of the other people had hired porters and walked more quickly than I, arriving at the top well before me. When I finally reached the samadhi place around noon, I felt absolutely exhausted. A nearby dharmashala offered lodging where pilgrims could stay close to the temple and samadhi area. I went to the 'ashram' office to ask for a room and got one near the temple. There, around the shrine, many people came and went, praying loudly and ringing bells. I spent the night sleeping restlessly in that noisy little room.

First thing next morning, I realized that I had to find another place. I could not stay in that busy area with so much commotion. I was worried, too, that in such a popular spot someone might recognize me and inform my family. So I walked around the mountain, exploring the whole area. Much of it was uninhabited and quite a jungle. In a small residential area I asked the people if they knew of any solitary place to live in, but no one could think of any such place.

As I continued exploring around the mountain, I came across a small hut consisting of just one empty room about 7x9 feet in size, with a small door and tiny window. Somehow I felt attracted to it and the surrounding area. No one lived nearby. It was quite a distance away from the temple with all its noise and people. My excitement grew as I contemplated living in this solitary little hut.

I rushed back to the ashram office where I found the temple manager and asked him if I could stay in that hut. He flatly refused, saying that it was not at all fit to live in. He pointed out that he had plenty of convenient rooms at the ashram. That remote place posed some risks, he warned, with nobody nearby. The ashram could not assume responsibility for someone staying there.

Then he asked me how long I wanted to use it. I said that I did not know exactly how long, but maybe a few weeks. I explained that I wanted to do my 'sadhana' or spiritual practice, which required a quiet place.

He asked, "Why can't you do your sadhana here, in the regular ashram rooms, by shutting the door to keep out the noise?"

We went back and forth like this, but he would not permit me to stay in the hut, and no amount of persuasion changed his mind. Disappointed, I left his office in a dejected mood.

Somehow I felt uncomfortable in that room, so close to the busy temple where noisy visitors passed through all the time. I was not at all happy there, so the next day I spoke again with the manager, pleading with him to let me have the hut.

Suddenly he asked me, "What type of sadhana are you doing that you need a special place?" Generally spiritual practice consists of repeating 'mantras' a certain number of times per day, plus chanting, reading holy books and doing other kinds of worship or 'pooja'.

I replied that my way of worship was simple and somewhat unconventional. I intended to stand back and observe my thoughts, desires and emotions with a view to understanding my true nature. For that I wanted a totally quiet place.

Again he said an emphatic no, stating that he had never given that hut to anyone because it was too lonely and far away from the temple, on the edge of the mountain. He pointed out that farming tools and other junk filled the room, making it simply too dangerous. I offered to clean it up, but still he refused.

Disheartened, I left again. It appeared that nothing I could say would change his mind. Then I thought that perhaps he did not take me seriously because of my city clothing. I wore good trousers, shoes, shirt, and hat. Maybe he thought that I was not genuinely interested in religious practice and not suited to be in this remote mountain area. These temple ashram devotees wore saffron-colored clothing and followed a prescribed path of worship.

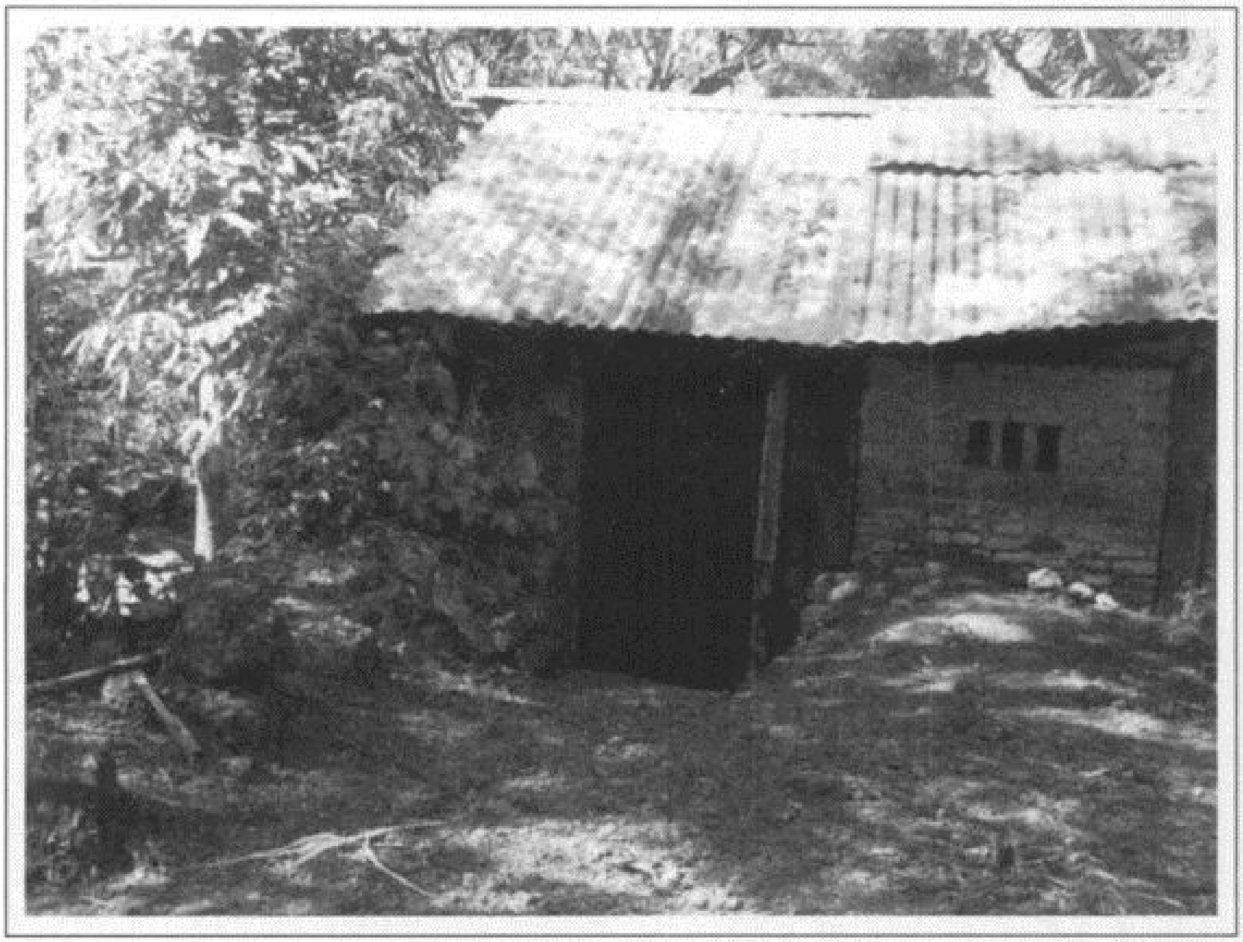
The next morning, after the pooja or worship ceremony, I went back to the office. Again I pleaded with the manager, saying "Please give me a chance, and if it is not convenient or safe after being there for a little while, I will let you know." I assured him that the ashram need not take any responsibility for me, that I myself would be fully responsible for everything.

At this third meeting, I saw that he softened a little. Finally he said, "Well, if you will be entirely responsible for yourself, then you can try it for a few days."

Jubilantly I thanked him and immediately went to the hut and cleaned it up thoroughly. So after three days of patient pleading, I had somehow been granted my wish. Finally, here was my quiet and solitary spot on a mountaintop! At last, in this noisy and restless world, I had found my quiet nest!

SOLITARY PILGRIM

Intense longing of many many years
And revolt of spirit has brought me here.
In scorching sun and gusty wind,
I climbed the mount to reach your door.
Alone, determined, devoted one,
With bleeding heart and battered soul,
Lifting heavy steps one by one,
To meet the mysterious, the unknown One.



The hut on Mt. Sajjangad: a stay in solitude for 7 months

Suspicious about the Stranger

After this, I experienced a great relief, feeling completely relaxed and totally unburdened. Thus began my stay on the mountain. I was determined to spend minimal time on my daily chores. I made a make-shift stove or 'chulah' using three stones. Dry twigs were available in plenty around the hut and served as fire wood. I cooked my rice early in the morning, ate half of it then and saved the other half for the evening. That left me with the whole day to be with myself. There was nothing for me to read, no prayers to chant, and nothing to keep me occupied. I had seen the limitation and thus the futility of all that.

To live with nothing to keep my mind occupied and nothing special to attract me was at first very difficult. It required intense watchfulness to keep my inwardness and not be active outwardly. I had to be alertly aware most of the time, so that it would not be easy for the thought-mind to indulge in its usual ways. Only when my concentration lapsed and I became a bit more dull would the thoughts, desires and emotions find their easy way in. Looking into myself every moment, discovering all the subtle wanderings of the mind, became my way of living.

My stay on Sajjangad Mountain started out smoothly, quietly. But very soon the villagers and later even the ashram people began to think about me suspiciously. I lived alone, away from the ashram, and did not attend the puja and rituals at the temple. They started having some doubts about me, wondering what this man was doing there. They thought that if I were a real seeker, I would be wearing saffron clothes or at least the traditional-style plain white clothes, and I would go to the temple to take part in prayers and worship.

The gossip started with people saying that I didn't talk with anyone, hardly ventured outside my tiny hut, and sometimes they observed me loitering on the mountain edge. Even some of the devotees living in the temple, the 'sannyasis' or renunciates staying there for years, started wondering about me and questioning whether I was a real seeker.

In every village there is always a government official whose job it is to look after that particular area to ensure that it is free from illegal activities, crime, etc. If there is something unusual, then he has to report it to the police headquarters. Someone from the mountain complained to this official about a strange man living alone in a tiny hut who rarely talked and never took part in the temple worship.

I had not given my name or family address to the temple manager, so no one knew who I was or from where I had come. They saw only my clothing, fancy boots, good trousers and hat, and expensive watch. Then they started imagining that I came from the city and was hiding there for some reason, since I had not revealed my identity to anyone. They became all the more suspicious about me and reported to the village official.

One day a uniformed policeman came to my door inquiring about me.

I told him, "I am a seeker and I have come to this holy place for my meditation. I am doing my worship in my own way."

He informed me in a very official tone, "You will have to go to the police station in the city to make a report about yourself and give the necessary information."

I replied, "But that office is at least 15-20 miles from here." He said, "I am sorry, but you still have to go there and report."

This presented me with a difficult situation. I did not want to go there, nor did I dare to just say no. But I was aware of the basic civil laws, having been a member of my city's municipal board. So I pointed out that one is not obliged to go to the police station unless the police have reasonable proof of some anti-social or criminal activity on one's part .

"People may have a doubt about me," I acknowledged, "but just because of that I don't have to go to the police station. By law it is not mandatory for me to go there. If you want to carry out an inquiry about me, have someone come to meet me. I am available to answer all your queries."

He left, but not very satisfied or convinced. After a few days a different person from the police department came – this time an inspector of higher rank. He too wanted to have a word with me. He appeared somewhat more educated and reasonable. This again posed a challenge: how to satisfy him about my credentials and worthiness without revealing my identity. It perturbed me a little to be in this whole situation. But I had to keep my patience and tolerance to make him really understand me and my intention of staying in solitude.

I welcomed the official and told him, "I can understand that it is your job, your duty to make inquiries and keep a watch on everyone around this sacred place of Swami Ramdas. I would like to tell you the whole truth about what I am doing." He appeared open to listen and not at all hostile.

"My basic issue is that I want to be in a quiet and solitary place to practice my own meditation. My little dwelling and this remote area are good for this. It is quiet and away from the temple and people. I am not given to rituals. Rather, I am interested in inquiry, meditation and the discovery of my own self within me. It is a different approach, but this is my way of worship."

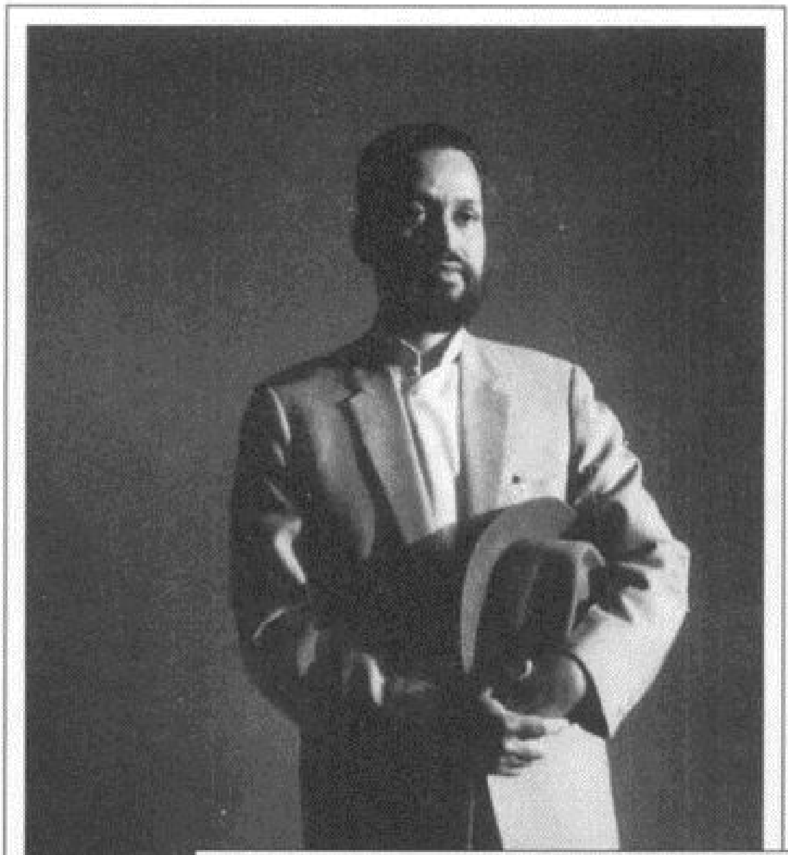
The official did not interrupt me or try to argue about anything, so I went on.

"My way of worship is not like the one followed by these religions and temples. I understand their way of rituals and so forth, but I don't subscribe to that. Those people who doubt me see me as a different person. They don't understand that there may be another way of worshipping in order to discover the divine."

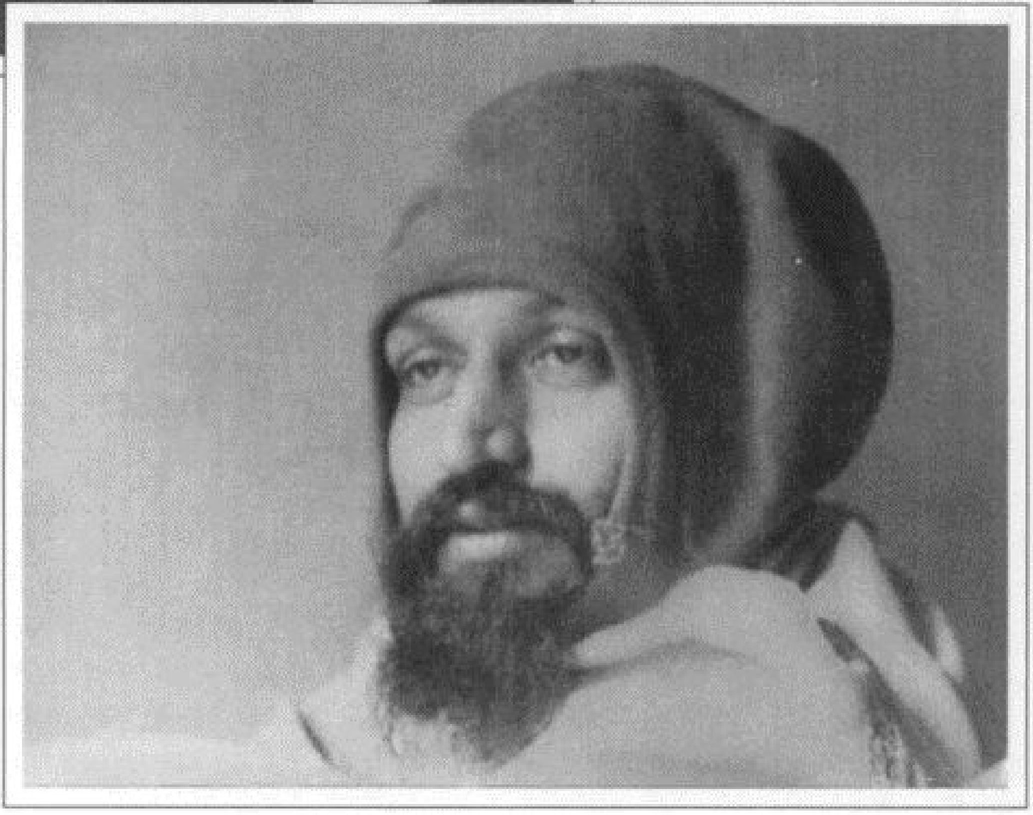
He actually appeared receptive to what I was saying about myself, so I took him into my confidence.

"I am going to be here for a few more months, and I am not going anywhere. You can at least know this much - that I come from a respectable family, but I don't want them to know where I am right now. If you really insist, I can give you my name, address, a list of my family members, etc. But I have come here to be alone, to do my worship in solitude and anonymity. I hope you will understand this and help me in my pursuit."

I waited quietly as he pondered this. Somehow he was convinced that I had told him the truth. This educated man had listened openly and was convinced of my sincerity. That left him free of doubt. He saw my way of living and the simplicity of my hut. I had appealed to him to help me, and he was satisfied. Finally he said, "I need to know nothing more from you."



No wonder people doubted that this well-dressed young man could be a seeker



Dressed to be protected from the wind and cold weather on the mountain

I did not have to give him even my name! Surprisingly, before leaving he saluted and gestured with folded hands saying 'namaskar,' wishing me all the best in my sadhana.

My clothing did look very unusual for this religious place, I had to admit. Nobody took me seriously as a seeker. The next day, when I went for a walk on the mountain rim, I realized that my modern, expensive clothing must be the main thing causing doubts in people's minds. I saw how one's way of dressing creates such an impression of who one is. Suddenly, very spontaneously, I lifted my hat and just hurled it over the edge of the cliff. As it sailed outward, I said, "You are the last vestige of society. Get off my head and go away." The hat circled and circled as it spiraled downward.

I felt a great sense of freedom at the thought of satisfying the police inspector. It was very good that he had understood and believed in me. Otherwise his investigation could have caused considerable trouble. Throwing my hat over the edge freed me, too. That hat had created an image, not only in the townspeople but in myself as well. I saw my own image of what I was: somebody special, above the common man, aristocratic. Not only did I throw away the hat, but with it I discarded the embedded image of myself hidden within me as well. From that time on nobody ever doubted me, and I lived there unhindered.

Memories and Thoughts Gush Forth

So the days passed quietly in subdued silence. However, my recent conversation with the inspector about my identity and my past triggered a fresh chain of thoughts. I wondered at this sudden opening of the floodgates after a period of quietude. Several thoughts and memories stormed my mind. First I began to remember my mother. Floods of anxiety swept over me: 'What would her state of mind be? What would she be thinking, now that I had not returned after a few days? She must be worrying a lot and would probably be fasting. My mother and brother will be searching for me everywhere. I wonder if they have sought the help of the police.'

Such strong thoughts about my mother kept returning. My mind did not recall anything else, such as leaving behind my property, money and other possessions. Concern for my mother always remained my strongest thought. At times I cried intensely, with tears streaming down. The memory of my mother remained constantly with me.

During quiet moments I gradually began to discover that in addition to the image of my mother, many other accumulated experiences, memories and psychological-emotional bonds were hiding quietly inside me. Even when I had no conscious image of my mother and when I was not doing anything in particular, other thoughts emerged, just pouring out. They were not even much related to what was happening at the time. I saw the thought process going on actively and constantly, regardless of the actual situation!

The strong image of my mother made me aware of these other thought activities in my mind. I grew more inward, more watchful, to find out what was happening inside. I saw that beyond these obvious thoughts some other subtle, hidden emotions and attachments at deeper levels were also present. As they came one by one I witnessed them attentively. I observed that the mind is not one homogeneous unit, but a rather fragmented bunch with many different levels of thoughts and emotions. Many underlying feelings and subterranean currents were seeking conscious recognition.

In this intense watchfulness, I saw that my mind was much more complex than just an instrument for decision-making. A portion of the mind always hides somewhere. I had never been in touch with the whole mind and all its hidden aspects. Gradually, I started making contact with the submerged layers, which had been unknown to me until then. It became a hard task of perseverance and patience to see those deeper, unknown layers.

The pain of leaving home and the haunting images of my mother had unintentionally forced me to look inward and search from where the pain emanated. The enigma of what I saw there shifted my focus of watchfulness entirely. This inquiry no longer entailed experiencing enlightenment. Now I had no goal in view, and I did not even think about God, Heaven, Spirit or the other-dimensional energy mentioned by many mystics. The challenge became my own self, me, the mind.

So, naturally, the focus of day-to-day living was to be aware and conscious of all the constant mind activity, the whole internal psychological structure and its operation. This ongoing challenge required that I maintain total awareness, to be open and attentive to every inner movement of thought, to be watchful and honest about the play of my own mind. Awareness is just that: to watch with objective attention and to sense oneself within and without. One has to watch impersonally, without trying to alter anything and without words or thoughts. One has to see things as they are, without any bias or reaction, hopes or fears.

In the beginning, one's watching is fragmented, as one part of the mind watches another. However, gradually, with increased sensitivity and alertness, one steps out of the field of thought and watches with one's whole being. The body, mind, senses and sensitivity are jointly involved in a unique amalgamation as one unit, to make full contact.

My heightened awareness and my passion simply did not allow me to be distracted and kept me right on the track. Looking constantly within, with alert awareness, became the way of my life. My mind could no longer hide in fanciful ideas or escape in wishful thoughts, plans or pursuits. Without any fixed routine or discipline of any kind, just to live simply, attentive in the present became my way of living in the mountain hut.

During this period I hardly slept. Everything in my mind became active. With intense watchfulness I observed all that was happening in the chasm of my mind. Even though I lay down, sleep did not oblige me. I saw that sleep is just an escape for the active mind, to hide for a little while.

Thus began my game of observing aloofly and understanding honestly and frankly, the wonder of the uncharted territory of mind. I could not lean on anyone or ask questions. With no books to guide me, no prayers to satisfy me, no chants to lull me, and no activities to escape into, I faced only my complex mind – the totality of the internal psychological structure – directly and squarely at every moment.

THREE

ALONE IN A HUT

Sex, Fear and Attachment

The last few months had been an incredible time of psychological turmoil and inner revolt. I had abandoned my family, home and security. Then I arrived at this unknown and solitary place. Occasionally, I would reflect on the recent upheaval and all that led up to it. The memories of that upheaval often nagged at me.

Now I was in this little hut, still without a clue as to what I was going to do or how I would carry out my new life of solitude. I had no guide or point of reference, no way to find the right approach or to set a definite goal, with no instructor or plan. The only thing I knew was that my old way of living was too mundane and superficial and no longer held any meaning for me. It was over and finished. But I felt unsure about what would come next, how I would live and act.

No interest remained in any ideology or theology, as I understood these to be wishful, intellectual dogmas. I saw the limitations of philosophy and religion, and such theories held no fascination. I had no attachment to any ancient doctrine, teacher or tradition. With no newspaper or radio available, I lived free from all those influences.

Desires and dreams I knew to be largely the outcome of cultural conditioning. All such pursuits had lost their allure and catch. I observed how the mind plays with those dreams and excitements. Through endless pursuits and sensations, using thought, the mind keeps one's energy engaged.

Now it felt as if all the wishful ways of my mind, with its usual movements and pursuits, were sensing their own end. Although my mind drew a blank in terms of dreams and plans, it was not dull or dead in any way. It did not become lethargic. On the contrary, the mind began to watch rigorously, and its pondering continued, but without a goal in view. The vibrancy and strong urge of inquiry operated, but not tied to any thinking, planning, or imagining. Instead an intense search within went on, a constant internal vigil. This was clearly a goal-less inquiry without any objective or direction.

My mind had lost its impulse to create hope, as the fictitious nature of thought began to unfold. All the escapist flights of my mind were seeing their own futility. There being no movement of thought, wanting, expecting, planning, etc., I had to face whatever happened at every moment. This brought a state of acceptance. With clarity of perception, I accepted every situation as it came along, and did not put up any struggle. The desiring mind began to slow down and hesitatingly came to its end.

I began to feel intense aloneness. In fact it took enormous courage and vigilance to live alone, with no escape from looking at oneself, facing what is. Finally one has to accept oneself as whatever one is.

Gradually, I began to sense a new intensity, a fresh surge of vibrancy without thought. I felt openness, a kind of quietude and space, but not like a deadness or void. The absence of thought/idea activity is not the negation of energy. Rather, it is only the elimination of thought as the dominant and compulsive drive. I could sense that the energy remained intact, active and alert – in fact it became more vibrant than before. The mind energy became more free, unburdened from fervent thoughts of past and future, and thus was very much in the present.

At that point the flight of my mind outside had diminished. The usual thought-mind was quiet yet sensitively alert. In that interval of quietude without thought, the unconscious layers had an opportunity to surface.

I arrived at this hut as a young man, healthy and vigorous, so to a certain extent there still existed a movement of subtle emotional activity and submerged feelings. The fact that I had left my house and my people, especially my mother, hung heavily upon me. The idea that I had abandoned my loved ones began to torment me terribly.

Although I had willingly and purposefully left them, some part of me remained attached to my family. I remembered and thought very much about my mother and brother, wondering how the family would fare without me. I got worried that my mother might become extremely unhappy over my leaving home, that she might suffer emotionally as a result. A part of my mind somehow kept trying to generate fear in relation to my mother.

Then I remembered my brother, thinking he also would suffer difficult times because of my absence. He did not know much about business, yet I felt he was capable and just the right age to learn. Still my mind continued to generate thoughts and concerns about him too. I recognized a subtle fear lurking behind these hidden thoughts and projections.

For the first time, I sensed the element of fear in myself, having always assumed myself to be a fearless person and not timid in any way. I had gone through some experiences which were proof of my fearlessness, both when hunting animals and also during the Indian Independence movement in 1944. Taking an active part in the freedom struggle had been a very risky and dangerous move. The police were after me! For hunting, too, fearlessness is necessary. From a very young age I used to go out with a gun and take on any hunting challenge, even attacking a wild boar when it came charging at me. Boars are really very terrifying creatures. I had once even attempted to shoot a tiger at night, hiding on a 'machan' or a special platform in a tree.

Many incidents in my life were adventurous and actually quite hazardous. Some of these actions required courage, and I knew that I had responded bravely. Ever since boyhood I acted boldly. In the sport of cricket, as captain of the team, I used to take up challenges as well as throw some to the other side. I never thought of myself as fearful or timid by any measure. So I assumed no fear existed in me.

When I went to that solitary mountain place, I suddenly became alone. There in that total aloneness I began to see fears coming out of somewhere in me. They arose about several things. 'What if someone robs me?' I started feeling afraid of getting sick due to my poor diet. 'If I become sick, nobody will look after me. What will happen then? I might even die here, all alone'. My mind suddenly started imagining all sorts of fearful things.

However there was no basis in reality for any of this. Thoughts were being generated from within my own mind. By producing thoughts of fear, my mind was prompting me to leave that area and go to some other better place that would be more comfortable and safe. But I saw that all of this came from some hidden part of my own mind. The fear and its source were hiding inside my own self, whereas nothing fearful actually existed outside in reality.

Despite knowing this, that there was nothing to fear, I saw how the fears grew stronger every day. This perplexing situation made me become more and more conscious of them, recognizing that fears existed somewhere inside me only. Now they were finally getting a chance to come out. With nobody to talk to about this, nobody to console me, no teacher to ask what to do, I had to be with myself and face myself squarely. No matter what thoughts arose, pleasant or unpleasant, it was not possible for me to escape, so I confronted the interior – my mind – in toto. As my inquiry was honest, I could not act in any other way or escape from myself.

In that confrontation with my mind I began to watch myself piercingly like a hawk. That watching of fear and all the other movements of subtle thoughts became my main occupation. In solitude I faced and watched everything in myself to understand the working and content of my internal apparatus. I had to unearth and understand all the hidden aspects of a self that had never been known to me before.

The drive of the mind in the outer world had gradually diminished and finally ended. It no longer provoked me to be busy externally with activity. Thought-mind remained quiet on that level, so now that which was hidden got a chance to show up. As if a lid had been removed, all the submerged material started surfacing. As I watched, more and more fears began to show up. I wondered at them because I had never been aware that they were even a part of me. Why were they there, and in what way had they been affecting me? I had to acknowledge that they had been hidden all this time, deep down in some part of my mind.

Along with the thoughts of fear, sex also became an important issue. Sexual thoughts and urges began to show up slowly. These, too, I had to face, watch and know. There was no scope for acting on them. I finally reached a point where these thoughts became very strong, obsessive and nagging.

Again that made me wonder why these particular thoughts came so intensely and insistently. I knew that I was not interested in sex. I had experienced how it is a shock to the whole nervous system and brain and only wastes vital energy. Knowing this, I wondered why now this particular drive of thought-emotion tried to take possession of me. Strong desires with their subtle movements tormented me. Where was this compulsion arising from, and where had all of this been hiding? I had to keep myself alert and acutely aware to see it all at every moment. I was surprised to see how the mind continuously creates these strong images and desires entirely on its own.

Finally, I began to question the actual validity of all these thoughts. Was there any reality to that constant stream of thought? I questioned the purpose and even the substance of these subtle promptings of my mind. Something from inside came up, such as a thought of danger or a sexual fantasy or whatever other thought, creating a psychological need or reason for me to act upon it.

All of this I just dispassionately watched. I observed that these unnecessary, mundane and sundry thoughts and emotions emerged on their own, having their own complex play, independent of reality. The concerns about my family members had no basis. I knew I had no real reason to worry, because they would be all right. To worry from such a far-off distance had no meaning. My mind knew these facts intellectually, but still an undercurrent of apprehension regarding my family persisted. Fear was unnecessary, but still it came up and persisted independently, on its own!

Usually, in regular life, whenever there is any idea, any emotion, any urge, any movement of thought, we act on it. We take it to be factual, with its own logic and validity. Yet I realized that whatever my mind may generate, think or imagine may not be at all real. And it certainly doesn't require that I should act on every arising impulse.

Instead of taking thoughts seriously or automatically acting on any of them, I started wondering and questioning: 'why and how are these thoughts coming now? Is there any validity to this activity of thinking continually?'

Fear and sex were predominant thoughts at that time, along with some intense feelings for my mother. These urges had never been strong in me in the past, so I started wondering why they now came suddenly and so aggressively. In this I began to see the play of imagination and mental cravings, how the mind sends out an idea that demands an action. All these mental projections surfaced one by one, being played out in front of me. I saw it as a kind of drama in mental space, but absolutely without roots in reality.

The realization came that the human mind is a creature of impulse, capriciously creating thoughts, which then compel us to act on them.

This drama lasted for several days and nights. I endured this unusual situation with patience, observant and keenly aware of each thought as it came, but without taking any action or ever getting carried away by them. This battle raged within and without, day and night. All of my mind's outer pursuits and cravings had come to an end. Now, in the absence of outer activities, I was confronted totally with my inner activity – the hidden self.

All the turbulent content stuffed deep inside started coming out. I tried to watch everything objectively and face it without any distraction or escape. Of course the first impulse was to leave the hut and go elsewhere to be free of this internal chaos. Even the priest of the nearby temple had asked me to stay close to the temple. 'May be I should go there instead, to be safe,' I mused.

But if I had gone there amidst other people, I would not have been alone or able to face myself squarely and totally. The urgency of not letting the mind start to play its subtle games and tricks now became an overriding necessity. Was something in me trying to induce me to give up? I simply had to understand the domineering mind and its ceaseless thrust and movement of thought. This required a confrontation with the totality of my psychological structure.

Everyday activities and the habit patterns of the conscious mind do not allow the content of the deep, hidden elements to surface easily. Only through intense aloof observation can all that is hidden have a chance to surface. Otherwise everything remains submerged while still very subtly affecting actions.

But now I could no longer yield to fantasies, emotions and pursuits. I did not act on any thought that came up. I stayed face to face with my inner reality, to know and experience the internal mechanism without creating more ideas and getting carried away with them.

This went on for a long time. Turmoil racked my entire mind, causing me many sleepless nights. The surface network of thoughts and actions had been broken up, and no stable layers of the mind remained. Everything was in flux and constant turmoil like boiling water.

The usual order and domination of the mind mechanism had been disturbed by my watching it so intensely. I came to see it as just a machine with its own routines, traditions, laws and habits. It has its own grooves to function in and patterns to follow.

In any psychological element such as fear, one fear is linked with other fears. If you are open to one fear and watch it impersonally with total attention, and without acting upon it, then all related fears, including the subconscious ones, will come to the surface, even as the watcher or the 'I' goes into abeyance. You will then see the whole of fear, which is by then delinked from the object or event which triggered it.

But generally you get caught in one fear, relate it to one object or person, and see only that. The mind creates a separate, obsessive drive in relation to that object alone. It concerns itself with and so concentrates its attention solely around that particular object of fear. This way the fragmentary drive of the mind isolates itself and remains unrelated to the other parts of the fear aspect. As a result, you are unable to understand fear in its totality and to rise above it.

I began to see this psychological mechanism inside me, how it is composed of different layers and segments. This seemingly solid structure is made up of so many divisions, and the mind works only through these channels, one at a time. It has developed its own complex but fragmented system of organization. For instance, it has divided life energy into different forms and has given them different names such as emotional energy, intellectual energy, sexual energy etc. In actuality, life is one whole energy, and there is no such thing as different energies.

However, 'divide and rule' is a cunning technique of the mind, which dominates and uses this energy by splitting it into different levels and compartments. Such fragmentation imposes a limitation upon this energy. The mind perpetuates itself very cleverly and effectively through such exclusionary actions, working with one fragment, one idea at a time, in quick succession and in an endless chain. But in this subtle way it never allows you to see its own working in its entirety and in one sweep at a given moment. I clearly witnessed the limited and fragmentary nature of the mind in its naked reality.

Hidden matter can only be released when the mind is still and free of obsessive ideas, when there is openness in the whole psychological structure. In such openness of mind – when all the exclusionary compartments are dissolved – the mind energy acquires a new velocity. It becomes intense, vigorous and sensitive.

This can create an almost unbearable psychological condition. At times it became too much for me to sustain the impact of this intense state on the body and brain. Then I would go out for a walk, relax, look at the sky, scan the limitless horizon, feel the beauty of nature around – all without thought. The important thing was that I never lapsed into any escapes. Generally, the mind instinctively finds some escapist activity to keep the thought process going, such as reading a book, talking with somebody, etc. I was very much alert and attentive to this habit of escaping. Now because of this vigilance, the mind could not easily find any escapes by way of distraction in order to retreat into its known grooves and compartments.

The first change I saw was how my whole mind started operating freely, and how there were no compartments working in isolation. Because the mind energy was no longer driven into channels by thought, the whole mind field became more vibrant and cohesive. This intensity required my constant alertness and attention. Existing in this state of mind, with this quality of unfragmented, total energy, kept me awake all the time.

In this way of looking at myself – at every thought, fear and movement of the mind – I saw the structure of what is called ego. This me – the ego, the collection of images, plans and ideas about myself – all of this came under intense objective observation. My ego – that crystallized central entity of self – was disturbed. I saw that its usual method of working swiftly through different compartments, levels and fragments had slowed down. Ego works with only one idea at a time and moves in one exclusive direction. It cannot work as a whole. It is not at all a cohesive unit and never utilizes the entire energy of the mind field. By its very nature it is limited and incapable of using the total energy. Isolated and fragmented activity is the pattern, organization and structure of the ego-mind.

Usually, the thought-action-reaction chain is the only internal process we know. This chain of ceaseless thoughts creates its own 'logic', its own illusion of cohesiveness. Our duties, commitments, and wishful pursuits based on thoughts all create a pattern for our life. That pattern and its fulfillment create unending interests, desires and actions. This becomes our operating system, which continues intact until death.

As I began to recognize thoughts as stray things moving in space, they lost their appearance of interconnectedness. Every thought was seen as a separate entity. Only our identification with and attachment to a thought give it continuity, time and space, thus creating the logic necessary to justify its line of action. This so-called 'logic' is nothing but a subtle and clever activity of the conditioned influences of the fragmented mind. It formulates its wishful plan of action for the smooth fulfillment of the goal of desire. I perceived and understood this one-sided illusory activity of the 'logical' mind. Its tempo and luster were lost, its thrust diminished, and my mind slowed down automatically without putting up resistance.

But now, I was not acting on any thought, idea, memory or emotion that entered my mind. Because thoughts were separated from action, my mind, the ego, lost the capacity to generate its own logic. This loss of ego-driven activity – the mind's logic – had quite an effect. Disrupting the pattern, subduing and arresting the thrust of thought, had disturbed the ego-mind greatly. Now my ego was actually fighting for its very survival. I saw it no longer as an assertive, strong entity, but only as unrelated components.

Thus the ego lost its strength. With that deep and clear perception of the fragmentary nature of the ego-mind, its fighting capacity as a unit diminished totally and scattered in disarray. It surprised me how experiencing intimately the fragments of ego helped me to loosen its crystallized structure.

With this experience of the disarray of the ego, I started feeling a kind of inner vibrancy. I sensed a new motion or flow not at all like my usual mind activity. My mind and brain began to feel an expanded awareness with nothing hidden within. All its contents and movements were revealed, and it assumed a new vibrancy.

The intensity of this vibrant state used to affect my brain and head and make me tired, at times leaving me almost exhausted. That kind of vigorous activity sometimes overwhelmed me. I saw that the nervous system and brain are not used to handling or sustaining the vibrancy of that total experience. When it became too much, I would relax, let go for a while and sit quietly, or go out for a walk along the rim of the mountain.

That kind of watchfulness became my meditation. Slowly my awareness grew much stronger in response to meeting the challenge of the thought-emotion mind. As the intensity of the thoughts of fear and sex grew, my watchfulness also became proportionately more and more intense.

The moment my attention wavered, thoughts and then the desires would rush in. To keep them at bay, to keep myself free, I had to be intensely attentive. In order to see every single desire that entered my mind, my inward awareness became very sharp and clear. I could see every fleeting thought as it appeared in my mental space. *The catchment area of my awareness became much wider, and polyangular attention came into being. I became conscious of the broader landscape of my mental space, since the divisions of all the hidden layers were eliminated and became one open unified space.*

This gave me a fresh capacity to look within, and my watchfulness and alertness grew even more intense. Multiangular attention became much deeper to discover all those inadvertent movements of subtle thought/emotional drives, which the sex impulse is. I watched that enticing subtle thought activity within me, how it starts and slowly develops. I saw that sex is nothing but an idea, a fanciful imagining that starts building and shaping itself. When it becomes focused, strong and vivid, it acts upon the body, influencing the nerves and glandular system.

But when the thought of sex is objectively and deeply observed right in its beginning, in the stillness of the total energy field, the incoming idea loses its hold *and ability to initiate action. It just loses its strength. Instead, a vibrant, effervescent space within is experienced.* I saw this drama being played out right before my eyes, inside of me. What an enchanting and mystical revelation!

That confrontation with the thought of sex helped me greatly. When the idea of sex became strong, I took that challenge, equally strongly, just to know why and from where this impulse came. I found that the idea of sex is very subtle. It works quietly, like a thief in the night. To catch the subtle movement, you need to have acute awareness all around within you. The challenge of sex gave me a new quality of in-depth watchfulness with high voltage awareness. To catch a dog one has to move faster than the dog. To arrest this subtle movement of thought/emotion, one has to reach the highest degree of sensitivity and watchful alertness.

I watched all those thoughts coming, taking shape, moving very quietly, subtly surfacing, becoming more exclusive, crude and vivid, and then influencing the body to stimulate the action. When the idea becomes very assertive and strong, it demands an action. It dictates to the body, influences the glandular system, and then involuntarily, action has to follow. The element of sex showed me this aspect of myself – how a feeling slowly and subtly builds itself up into an idea. And when it develops into a one-pointed strong desire, it projects out to compel action.

The understanding and clear perception of what was actually taking place within me grew and expanded, making me see that it is possible to watch and deal with this incoming thought before it triggers any response. I became eager to find out if one can dissolve all thoughts that create longing and demand action.

With wonderment and curiosity I started to look into myself, questioning if one can actually stop the flow of thought entirely!

So I took up that challenge: to observe and follow the whole trajectory of thought and its movements, which becomes sex. Watching with total attention into myself I experienced that it is possible to dissolve the thought of sex right at the beginning. Without such an intense level of watchfulness I would have indulged in thought again. But I saw that in that sharpened state of polyangular watchfulness, thought does get dissolved. It no longer continues. Then only the pure watchfulness, and state of heightened energy within remain. Pure watchfulness can dissolve thought, leaving a quietude and state of deep inwardness.

This was an important experience: *indulgence in thought dissipates the energy, whereas dissolving thought through watchfulness liberates the energy, augmenting its flow.*

Once again, I experienced a heightened vibrancy – the experience of energy which is free from thought or mind.

Thus the idea of sex had helped me discover the secret of dissolving thought. Because its challenge was so strong, it demanded equally strong attention. Nothing else had helped me so much to understand myself. Experiencing the transformation of sex energy came as a great revelation to me, because I saw that dissolving thought could be used for releasing energy.

Some thoughts like sex, fear and anger have more energy locked in them than others. Dissolution of even a single dominant thought could augment and enrich my energy reserves, thereby enabling me to arrest the thrust of subsequent thoughts. The progression of thought to action dissipates energy, but when watched, understood and dissolved, it becomes a rich source of energy. Thus, I realized that thought is a potential energy source.

FOUR

RELEASING THE TRAPPED ENERGY

Thought: The Potential Energy-Pocket

This first realization about the nature and source of the sex drive gave me a new confidence. I felt that I could deal with myself, with my own emotions and conditionings. Usually when the thought of sex becomes obsessive, one is helplessly carried away and compelled to act upon it. Now I had learned the secret of being free of this compulsion: to maintain aloofness and detachment from the thought which excites and instigates the feeling and finally culminates in action.

The second understanding was that the very attempt to maintain aloofness while watching a problem is itself problematic.

In our usual way of approaching problems, total aloofness never comes. Even in our mental inquiry about our own problems, we become related and attached to them. We are not aware of this binding relationship that we have formed with problems and consequently we never get over them. We do not question the actual validity of the issue or of the thought, or see the nature of our relationship with it.

Normally we think that a particular emotion, thought or behavior is itself the problem, and that we have to eliminate it or replace it by its opposite. But thought can never truly resolve the problem. Actually, it is the thought/mind that is the problem maker, and hence any mental inquiry into a problem is a self-defeating exercise, because one is only going round and round in circles. There can never be a comprehensive solution to a problem as long as the mind is attempting to find it because the mind itself is the source and substance of the problem and casts its heavy shadow upon it.

The crucial question then, is whether it is possible to be completely free of the spell of the mind while inquiring into a problem and trying to find its solution.

When one is not in the grip of thought but intensely alert about the issue as a whole, that heightened alertness itself becomes a powerful energy-field. In that state of pulsating sensitivity, both the thinker and the thought, the problem maker and the problem vanish magically. This is the creative act of the mysterious Unknown. Indeed, the vibrant state of attentive alertness is an invitation to the spirit of the Unknown – a magic key to open the door for the Timeless to come in.

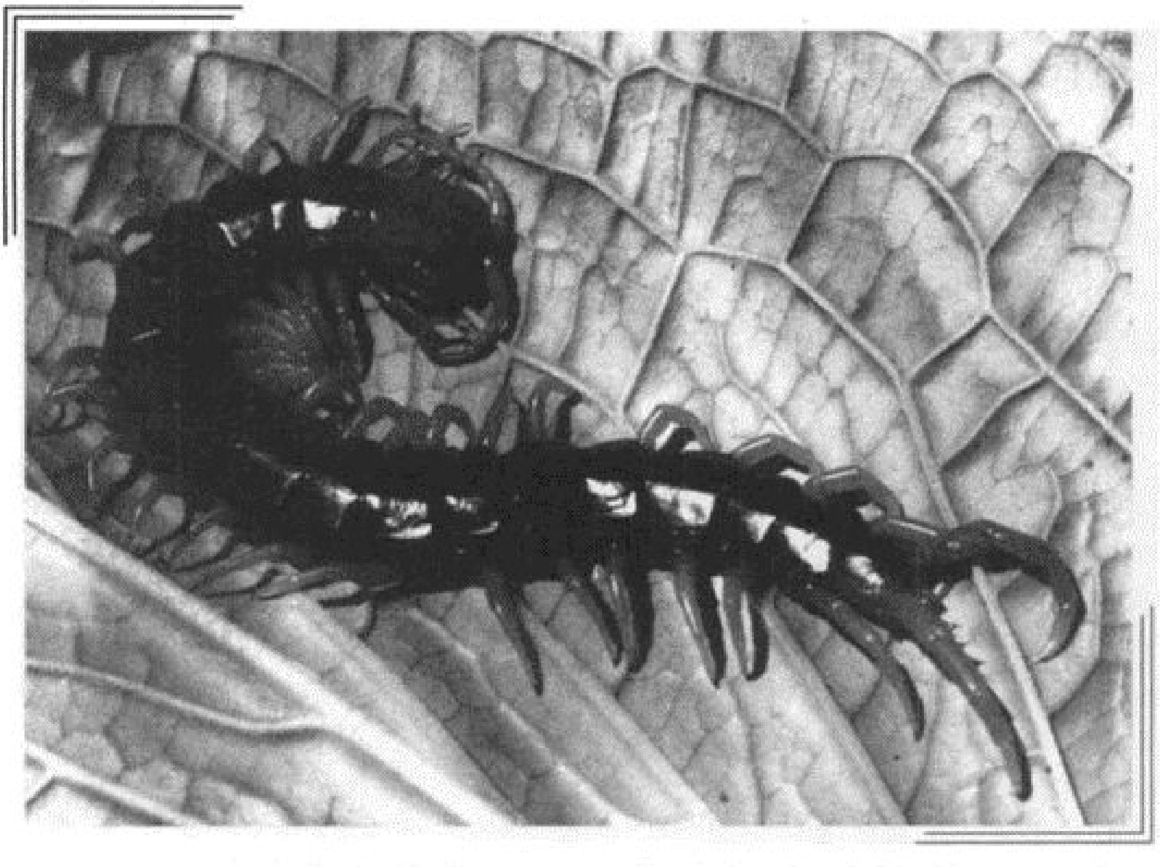
These were the insights that I gathered from my inquiry unto myself. In looking at and questioning the validity of the very problem of sex, and pondering intensely and honestly on why the problem should arise again and again, my connection with it was suddenly snapped. I was released from its grip. Due to my in-depth questioning and the very intensity of it, the sexual urge disintegrated. For the first time I experienced freedom from the obsession and domination of the aggressive thought/feeling. This release from the burden of thought/action brought relaxation and a feeling of unique quietude.

After taking the full challenge of the sex drive, and experiencing the disintegration of that thought-induced sex urge, the idea of sex just vanished for quite some time, giving me a deep sense of relief. Prior to this time, that idea had been creating intoxicating pictures and images, which incessantly occupied my mind.

Then came upon me a flood of sensitivity, with a previously unknown intensity. This surge was released from somewhere within me. Energy which had been caught up and used by the emotional drive of thought was no longer kept bound. This generated heightened sensitivity and a feeling of wonder at how this had happened. I found that my awareness and attention into myself became much deeper and more profound. With this intense awareness I could see more dispassionately many other thought-related issues, including fear and grief. This increased awareness brought me a new clarity which gave sobriety, depth and balance to my perception. It introduced a state of objectivity, detachment and aloofness.

As I enjoyed this new surge of energy, one day a fearful situation developed in my hut. The tiny room, about 7x9 feet, had very dim lighting. Only one tiny oil lamp provided light, there being no electricity. As I sat casually on my little mat spread on the floor, suddenly I noticed something moving on the floor in front of me. I became conscious of the zig zag movement made by a reddish, reptile-like creature. This dangerous-looking animal, maybe 8 to12 inches long, had many legs and claws. Although I knew this to be a centipede, I had never seen one that big. I thought it must surely be poisonous because it was so unusually large and dangerous looking!

I watched this creature moving about on the floor, thinking it would simply go out since the doorway was open. But then to my amazement, more of the same kind began to appear! One more came, and then another and another, until seven or eight of them were all crawling around on the floor in front of me. They zigzagged everywhere in the small room, with more coming through the door! I just sat there on my mat watching them. Once I thought of jumping out of



A poisonous centipede like the kind I encountered in the hut. I took this picture years later.

the room, but I knew that would be impossible. I could not make any move to get out because the room was so small and so many of them were slithering around.

They crawled and crowded all around me, even getting on the mat upon which I sat! I could not believe this awful situation. In that dark, shadowy light I watched in amazement all these strong, frightful, foot-long creatures, which I knew to be poisonous. The fear of being bitten, of suffering horribly, of death alone in that hut all these imaginations swirled in my mind. No neighbors could hear me if I shouted for help. I was completely alone and isolated.

The situation suddenly gave me a great shock. What could I do? The creatures had me surrounded. I could not move. Besieged from all sides, something inside me became totally frightened, a deep terror I had never experienced before. Ordinarily, I would have done something. I would have acted, jumped up and attempted to kill those creatures. But I had no physical or mental reaction to the fact in front of me. My total energy experienced the event, with no thought of killing them in my mind. I was simply face to face with fear, and that horror was total. I sensed and felt something intensely active within. My entire being became completely consumed by this intense sensitivity of fear.

I fully sensed that feeling without reacting in any way. A reaction would have been to do something, to run or jump. But that did not happen. Fear itself is a reaction, but through aloof observation it loses its strength. I experienced the fear and stayed with it, accepting the situation fully, without escaping into action. I remained in that situation for quite some time, just facing myself, watching every movement inside, afraid yet very alert, without reacting to it in any way. In this state of total experiencing, no room existed for any thought or reaction of any kind.

For some time I experienced fully my internal fear, just forgetting about those dangerous creatures. They may have been crawling everywhere. I simply forgot entirely about their presence. My internal state of fear consumed me completely. I was no longer afraid 'of' something, there being no object or cause. This was the pure feeling of total fear.

In the all-encompassing and total state of fear, the idea of the dangerous creatures did not play a role. I had no memory of the centipedes, or awareness of whether they remained there or not. I experienced total inwardness without thought. In facing and accepting this pure feeling of fear in its totality, without any reaction or idea, there came a cohesive, unfragmented sensitivity. I watched as the intensity reached its maximum degree, still with no thought of danger or of the centipedes.

And then, the energy that the idea of fear and the related action would have consumed was released. Surprisingly I experienced a new surge, a freedom from the domination of reactionary thought-mind over my life energy. What a revelation and tranquility! And the centipedes disappeared on their own, as quietly as they had appeared, totally unnoticed.

Through these experiences I saw how the mind starts with a thought or idea such as sex or fear and then builds it up silently. This stimulates the imagination, which then affects the body, nervous system and glands. That in turn stimulates some action or reaction.

Seeing thought in its entirety, in my own internal energy field, without getting carried away by any reaction, brought a new depth of attention. In this way I began to see vividly and fully how the mind mechanism operates using thought. With that clear perception, I saw that thought activity started losing its importance and hence also its grip. My mind was losing its mind-ness.

In that freedom from the usual thought/reaction sequence, a new state of thoughtless attention awoke. This brought into play a fresh quality of energy, which is alertly attentive, but without any movement of thought. When that constant stream of thought came to an end, the whole sphere of mind remained tranquil, serene and utterly quiet. This was a totally new experience: existence without the push/pull of thoughts, urges, emotions, fears, worries, etc.

When thought-bound-up energy is freed, this brings a new, expanded sensitivity and vibrancy, which is a unique experience. It is a great asset in the discovery of what is hidden within the realm of mind. But this sensitivity or vibrancy, if not perceived rightly, with detached awareness, invites the hidden elements of emotionality to enter. It makes you either highly alert and alive within to remain free of them, or it creates the possibility of slipping into the pool of emotionality, which we harbor deep down within ourselves.

So although heightened sensitivity is an important asset, it can become a liability if the intensity of objective awareness and detachment diminishes. *One needs to have a very acute awareness in order to catch the inadvertent slip into emotionality. The challenge is to maintain this heightened sensitivity while allowing the hidden emotional levels to surface freely but without being carried away by them.* Then one can understand the whole significance of emotionality, which in turn enriches one's own degree of sensitivity. In this way the newly freed energy and sensitivity continue to gather and expand without being dissipated by still-hidden reactions and emotions.

Such a slip actually happened to me very poignantly one day. When I was sitting quietly alone, a thought of my mother subtly crept in. As I loved my mother dearly, I inadvertently savored the memory of her. I let the memories of past times come up, remembering how much she always did for me, worrying about her well-being, wondering what she would be doing now. All these thoughts kept streaming past. I became increasingly emotional until I found myself crying over the fact of having left her months before. The memories and the weeping and more thoughts and more emotionality just went on and on until I was completely drained by it all.

But some part of me aloofly watched the thought-emotion reaction chain. This episode of sentimentality came about from a single thought of my mother. Somewhere I saw and understood that the thought of my mother was simply a memory, a mental image of her. The thought itself had no validity. It was only sentimentality, a wisp of the past, a mere fantasy. What news did I have of her now? Besides, what could I do from here? I saw how my thoughts and memories had grown and accelerated into an avalanche, deteriorating into emotionality, and thus draining me. I recognized the fictitious and empty nature of the emotional reaction that had been caused by a single thought.

From then on, thought itself became the focal point of my attentive awareness. What had been the use of my draining myself in this way? I saw how an idea stimulates another mental movement or reaction which we call emotion, and then begins to glorify it in the name of something acceptable like love. For the first time, I saw that these surges of emotions and sentiments are just another kind of thought.

Such thought-induced reaction then stimulates the glands and nervous system, which in turn affects other areas of the physical body. We then experience it physically, having actual tears, which give it the feel of reality. I saw that the mind produces this effect, playing with it, and glorifying these thoughts, safely labeling them as love or whatever else. I watched this process start, build up, and go on with its own momentum. Then this whole emotional play would recede, leaving me very sensitive and inwardly alone.

From that aloneness came a surge of tenderness. This again would make me weep. My whole body and nervous system became very delicate and sensitive. Tears appeared, just rolling down my face, leaving me in wonderment as to their source. Something wept from deep within, but I could not put a name or cause on it. I saw how so much was locked up inside me. I had not been aware of these choked-up emotional pockets within myself. This whole experience helped me realize a highly sensitive inner state.

The realization of this sensitivity was subtle and total. Tremendous sorrow existed somewhere in me. But I saw no trace of the apparent cause, not like sadness about something in particular. I sat quietly and the tears would just flow. Although wide awake and watchful to see if mere sentimental ideas caused this, I had no trace of thought. Absolutely no thoughts came about anything, any situation, person or event from the past or in the present.

I could not understand why I would be weeping without any cause whatsoever. I felt as if the whole of myself became flooded with pure sensitivity and tenderness. My entire being wept, as though something was affecting me from hidden, unknown levels, from my very depths. As if a lid had been taken off a tight, very full container, something gushed out from the innermost part of my being.

This was a total experience of the sorrow of life. The personal or causal emotions of 'my' sadness no longer remained. I faced the totality of sorrow, deep and well-hidden within. I had not been aware of this huge accumulated reservoir. It was not the memory of a personal suffering which would have a specific cause, but rather the sorrow of being human, an unknown accumulation of pain, both my own and that of the whole of humanity. This had been kept hidden below, around the root of my personality, in the depths of my individuality. Like fear, this pure, elemental sorrow had been suppressed and kept deep below the surface.

Such deep-rooted feelings can be triggered by a single thought. When one stays alert and watchful, what starts out as a thought loses its relevance, and one remains face to face with this internal reservoir of grief. The experience of profound sorrow is unrelated to any specific cause. Therefore one is totally consumed by the sorrow.

This is the causeless creation of Life. Which is totally beyond the comprehension of thought-mind. It was my first experience of a state which is free from idea, free from the memory-mind, and free from cause and effect.

I saw that we ordinarily play only on the surface of the mind, interacting on that level. The hidden cannot emerge when the mind is occupied in its superficial and external activity. However, I came to realise that once the submerged is allowed to come up freely, it can be looked at and understood objectively. It has to be seen aloofly, with no effort to act upon it or analyze the reasons for its appearing. To see without bringing in any thought: that is awareness. In this state, that which is hidden and suppressed will surface freely.

In the beginning, when I felt that incredible, deep sorrow, it intimidated me completely and made me fearful. But facing and sensing this fear fully, in its totality, without thoughts or escapes, gave a new magnitude of intensity to my awareness. Watchfulness – this all-around attention into myself of what was before me and within – me brought about a state of totality of being, an attentiveness without attachment, plus freedom from all ideas, thoughts or dreams. Only complete perception, a polyangular intense watchfulness, can bring this about. This was a prelude to experiencing the wholeness of life.

Thus my weeping and sensing of sorrow helped me experience my deeper, hidden personality. Usually we weep over some particular idea. We feel a cause or disturbance that stimulates the emotional response. But that response is a fragment with a specific cause. Now, weeping did not occur in a fragmented way, not from feeling sad about some particular incident. Earlier there had been a time when an idea – a memory about my mother – made me cry. Only that fragment of my being which retained the thought of my mother wept then.

Generally when we shed tears, it is over a single cause. One part weeps, feels sorry, feels self-pity, etc., and this part is consciously unrelated to other parts. We have one cause, a reason, and we say that this one is making us unhappy. But the current cause is only the tip of the iceberg, a fragment. We have to transmute the fragment with intense, unattached inwardness, which will lead us to the totality.

Basically, we never face any issue in its totality. It is necessary to face ourselves openly, to see all the parts, to experience the problem in its entirety. To see all of it, inside and out at the same time, is to end it. This is the key.

Now I began to see the exclusionary role of thought/idea, which gets eliminated in the chasm of total awareness. Weeping became a total experience, an in-depth fact of life. It brought about an increased depth of awareness. That weeping and the resulting psychological tenderness free from thought brought about a sense of wholeness and integration. I saw that the whole of my self became tender and sensitive, acutely alert and attentive.

With awe and wonder I experienced this state of high-voltage sensitivity of the whole being, without the presence of any thought whatsoever. In this state there is no idea, no shadow of mind as thought, no cause. This is a causeless state, an impersonal experience of Life energy.

My crying over my mother was a solitary idea, a fragment, but that triggered the experience of total-ness of being. All the unknown sorrow within me poured forth, and this led me to experience pure, elemental sorrow. This in turn led me to experience the totality of myself, with no hidden pockets. It was a wonderful revelation to discover how the total experience of sorrow had the capacity to bring out the fragrance of wholeness of being.

I spent my days and nights in such intense self-observation with full, multiangular attention, and it developed into a kind of meditation. This was not prayer, not concentration of thought, nor a hopeful pursuit of any wishful idea. Rather, my meditation involved a constant vigilance into this whole movement of thought/emotional activity within and without.

I did not try to find out or analyze the cause of any of these emotions, fears, or urges of the mind's wanderings. Instead I allowed this ego-mind to come out in its full flood, in its naked passion and expression, so that its whole picture could be seen, the entire content observed. In this dispassionate observation, the momentum of the thought process slowed down. Its intensity just diminished. Then, the next minute, some other stray thought would show up, but not with its usual strength to capture the Life energy for its own play.

Watchful alert observation in every moment became my way of living in the hut. I saw that the intensity and depth of watchful attention were increasing, and I felt a kind of objectivity within. As the depth of perception and aloofness of observation expanded, the thought process slowed down, and I experienced serenity and tranquility. *I threw up undigested thoughts as it were, and experienced a great sense of relief and freshness as a result. I was cleansed of all the stored up psychological toxins of the past.*

During this time I did not indulge in any intellectual, analytical or logical thought/mind activity or react in any way. I did not label the thoughts good or bad, or feel either sorry or happy. I did not look for explanations, nor did I judge or cling to any particular memories. Hence, alert and aloof observation occurred unhindered. I no longer cared to indulge in any psychological games of analysis and positive or negative reaction.

With this dynamic and intense watchfulness within and without came some moments of quietude, followed by a sense of deep relaxation. But soon another set of thoughts or totally unexpected ideas would emerge out of nowhere on the horizon of mind and take me completely unawares. I observed everything as it came along.

During this period I slept very little. Sleep became a state of very subtle and sensitive wakefulness. When I watched intensely in this way, no state of forgetting or falling into semi-consciousness was possible. In sleep we usually lose ourselves and forget everything for a while. But for me there could be no escape even during sleep. Although I slept, rested or lay down, there was no forgetfulness, but a state of wakefulness and attentiveness all the time. I would lie down yet stay awake all night, and in the morning I would realize that I had not slept at all! But I often did not feel tired from this sleeplessness.

Actually, I had two responses to this experience: sometimes the feeling of not having slept and of being exhausted, yet at other times I felt fully rested. However, the whole experience of basically staying awake continuously day and night was extremely strenuous. My body, brain and eyes got very tired. At such times I would just let go of everything and relax, go out for a walk on the edge of the mountain and observe the vast panorama before me. Looking at the deep green valleys below and the blue expanse of sky above filled my being to the brim. This touch of fullness rejuvenated me and charged me again with renewed sensitivity, creating a feeling of incredible enormity.

A few days passed like this, and I began to realize that the mind, the thought process, had lost its capacity to escape into any of its safe pockets such as outward activity, or even sleep. I watched everything internal at every moment. All the thought/idea activities came up to the surface of the mind and into the field of awareness. I saw sleep as nothing but going into the hidden pockets of the mind and playing there while the conscious mind lies at rest. All these subtle layers gradually became exposed, were observed, understood fully and thus eliminated. The whole structure of mind and its every movement were under constant observation. No hiding places remained for the thought/emotion activity.

As I faced each aspect of myself, the watching became deeper and more intense. I saw the mechanism of my mind again and again in relation to each fear, each thought of sex, each memory, each emotion. I saw that the mind flows like a fountain, gushing with the water of thoughts/emotions/desires, all rushing to go out somewhere for their fulfillment in action.

With this intense watchfulness, the fountain of thoughts slowed down, with fewer and fewer desires, less gushing of the waters. I began to experience moments when no desires and no thoughts at all came into the mind, creating a kind of interval or space within. That interval was very powerful, vibrant and yet comforting. I was curious to find out if one could stay in that thoughtless, desireless state for more and more time. But then this subtle desire, the very thought of wanting that state, would itself make the thoughtless interval disappear.

I totally accepted whatever went on in my mind, without a desire to change anything. This internal watching and accepting became my way of living. My entire world was what was happening in this little hut, and I was in touch with that world *with the whole of my being.*

I began to remain fully in my own energy field without any interference by my own mind. Thought activity started dissipating and losing its grip. Endurance and tolerance became my way of life. I saw that the intensity of this highly charged sensitivity – the energy free from thought – was becoming very obvious and strong within me. I watched, felt and objectively observed everything happening inside.

What a wonderful experience to be in this state, to see how the mind as an entity slowly lost its capacity to assert itself over the energy! Surprisingly, I was witnessing a new momentum of pure tranquil energy quietly and mysteriously flowing within.

Then this energy field itself took charge of my life.

In alert and attentive perception
Energy dissipation is arrested
And is gathered within
To stay at home,
Tranquil and serene.

FIVE

THE EXPLOSION

Shattering The Ego-Mind: A New Energy Flow

My days and nights passed in this intense, watchful, attentive state, in an almost unbroken momentum of awareness. At times I wondered where this whole adventure would take me. A deep sense of wonderment crept in about the experiences and states through which I was passing. I had no expectation or fear of any kind. I simply watched every internal movement, accepting life as it was unfolding.

My path and my journey consisted of totally facing myself and passing through the unknown. As this inner pilgrimage continued, one day the mystery of life suddenly and unexpectedly struck like a lightning bolt!

Around noon, I cooked my rice as usual and put out the wood fire. Although the rice was ready, I decided to wait a few minutes for it to cool before eating. I drew back a little and sat casually on my mat, with my mind completely at rest.

Suddenly, in that quiet and inadvertent moment, totally unanticipated, a mysterious action struck.

Something inside me literally exploded, giving me the shock of my life.

In a split second a fountain of unknown energy sprang forth from within. This surprising energy flow was of a truly new kind, different from anything I had ever sensed or experienced before. *It felt soft, sensitive, joyful and dynamic yet peaceful. It filled me with profound reverence, deep awe and love.* Such a mystical and powerful explosion in my inner domain was a miraculous event.

This explosion affected and transformed my entire personality. In this *dramatic breakthrough in consciousness, the whole crystallized structure of the ego/mind got literally shattered. This opened up an energy flow of a totally new kind. No mind – no thinker or I – remained while this was happening. A dynamic, intuitive state came into existence, where the past in the form of memories and the future in the form of desires were not there. This brought in a flow of total now-ness.*

I did not know where this flow of new and different energy came from or how all this had occurred. The whole experience happened very suddenly and unexpectedly, and was extremely pleasant and deeply blissful. I never had experienced such a flow of all-powerful energy in my life. It swept me off my feet and took charge of me completely. I was steeped in joy, dynamicity and ecstasy, feeling a real freedom and inner tranquility. Everything inside and out became intensely alive, giving me a taste of the vibrant present. A celestial shower drenched my whole being, submerging me in serenity.

Something unknown and mysterious had taken place! I was overflowing with happiness, and in that excitement I got up and even danced around the room in total abandonment. I was the most ecstatic person on earth at that moment. My life had been touched by the sublime and sacred.

How long I remained in this state I do not know. Eventually, the upsurge of ecstasy subsided, but thought activity was still entirely absent, not even lurking in the corners to come creeping in stealthily. Instead, I experienced profound quietude. The flow of this fountain of new energy slowly diminished, leaving behind deep feelings of humility and reverence. For the first time I vividly experienced a totally serene state in my whole being. I sat down on the floor and immediately became engrossed in an intense inwardness with profound silence.

From this point onward my meditation took a different form. It became a play of this new internal energy. I could sense only the flow, a glow within, of this new energy moving quietly. A momentum of twinkling energy, this fountain of intuitive flow initiated the beginning of a totally new life experience.

After a period of deep silence I fell asleep. However, my experience of sleep was now completely different as well. It became a time of internal dynamicity, without the play of the mind as dreamer. I experienced sleep as a state of serene internal existence out of which I emerged very fresh and vibrantly alive.

Later that day, after a short rest I went out of the hut. The whole scene before me shone with new depth and clarity. The horizon appeared absolutely boundless, giving the experience of infinity. It touched me to the depth of my being, intensifying the taste of timelessness. No center or 'I' as perceiver existed. Instead, the act of perceiving was itself an internal experience of the panorama from inside out. This new way of perceiving or experiencing a landscape which I had seen many times before overwhelmed me.

I sat down upon a wooden log, wondering about this unique internal explosion that had occurred. There came a profound sense of gratitude and fulfillment. As I pondered this unusual experience, I slipped into a deep internal silence. In this silence, I became aware of the same movement of glimmering energy.

I do not know exactly how long it worked upon me that day. Slowly the flow subsided, leaving me joyous and deeply contented.

That evening I had a strong urge to inform my mother about this mind-quake, this shattering of the ego-mind. It was so mysterious and exciting, a first-time, first-hand revelation! I realized that my mother, living so far away from me, still remained the closest person to me, and I wanted to share it with her only. I felt like going to the edge of the mountain to announce to her at the top of my voice about the amazing breakthrough that took place. This is like a new birth! Surprisingly, quite spontaneously, a message to my mother came forth in poetic form, in Marathi, my mother tongue.

I had never before written poetry. In this new expression of life, the words came out spontaneously in a meaningful way. Thereafter, for a while every day, I wrote a poem to describe this new energy and its unusual play within me.

I wrote a few poems in Hindi and even in the English language. I discovered that language was no barrier and I used to be filled with wonder at the way the words would all fall in line. On completing each verse, I would take a look at it, only to marvel at its neat rhythmic pattern and its well-integrated theme and structure:

SURPRISE VISITOR

When all wanderings and searchings came to an end
Mind realized there is nowhere for him to go.
I sat then alone, in utter humility and anonymity
Oh, then you came to visit me uninvited!

Thereafter, the nature and style of sitting with myself changed. It became a spontaneous expression of this new energy. I passed my days in the hut with absolutely no discipline of any kind, no expectation, and no hope about anything. I remained receptive, allowing the new energy to come and to work in its own way, and that took different forms. It started touching various regions inside my body, gathering around one part for a moment and then shifting to another part. It stimulated one particular area for a time and then disappeared. Like a game of touch-and-go, it was a kind of play of that amazing, glowing energy.

I had to stay quiet and empty for it to appear again to carry out its plans within me. The energy would appear – unpredictably, unpretentiously, quietly – work for a while in its mysterious way within, and then leave silently. All its movements were unanticipated, almost secret, deeply sacred. Sometimes my mind would visualize and anticipate the direction, but the energy never obliged my mind. In this way the secret inner activity went on, keeping me innocent, empty and almost dumb. It alone directed the show! Any activity of my mind would hinder the movement of the energy. Nevertheless, the energy always remained untouchable and uninfluenced by the mind.

From these months of watching the movement of thought, of seeing the mind in its intricacies and its whole structure, I had begun to realize how every idea is programmed in our brain cells from which it springs. In fact every idea, every thought, has a biological counterpart in each cell of the brain.

But now, after this explosion, I saw that no idea entered my mind inciting action. Instead an intuitive flow – that new energy – worked instantaneously and spontaneously. The new intelligence does not function through the vehicle of thought or memory, so it has no contact with the regular active brain.

I began to see, and have since understood more fully, that the brain and nervous system, as they have evolved to this point, are not capable of receiving and cooperating with this unique energy flow. They are not able to be the right instrument or medium for the expression of the new-dimensional energy. It has a different source and a new quality all its own. *The nervous system and brain have developed over time, in cooperation with the mind, to be an instrument for the expression of thought/emotion activity only*. Nature has helped to evolve the central nervous system as a means for the smooth functioning of the mind as a thinking, reacting mechanism.

However, this new energy, which resides beyond the border of the mind, needs a new or modified instrument for its functioning and expression. This new energy is a momentum of the present and acts spontaneously, independently and intelligently. The brain, on the other hand, functions through thoughts, calculations, memories, and the past. *This new energy has nothing to do with thought, and does not use the regular active brain. Thus the brain is basically laid to rest, and a profound peace comes into existence as a natural phenomenon. This peace becomes the natural state of the whole being.*

Oh My Mother

Dear Mother ...

I am born again – a new born babe
Celebrating my new birth on this earth.
But Mom, how can a son describe to his Mother
The events of his mysterious rebirth?

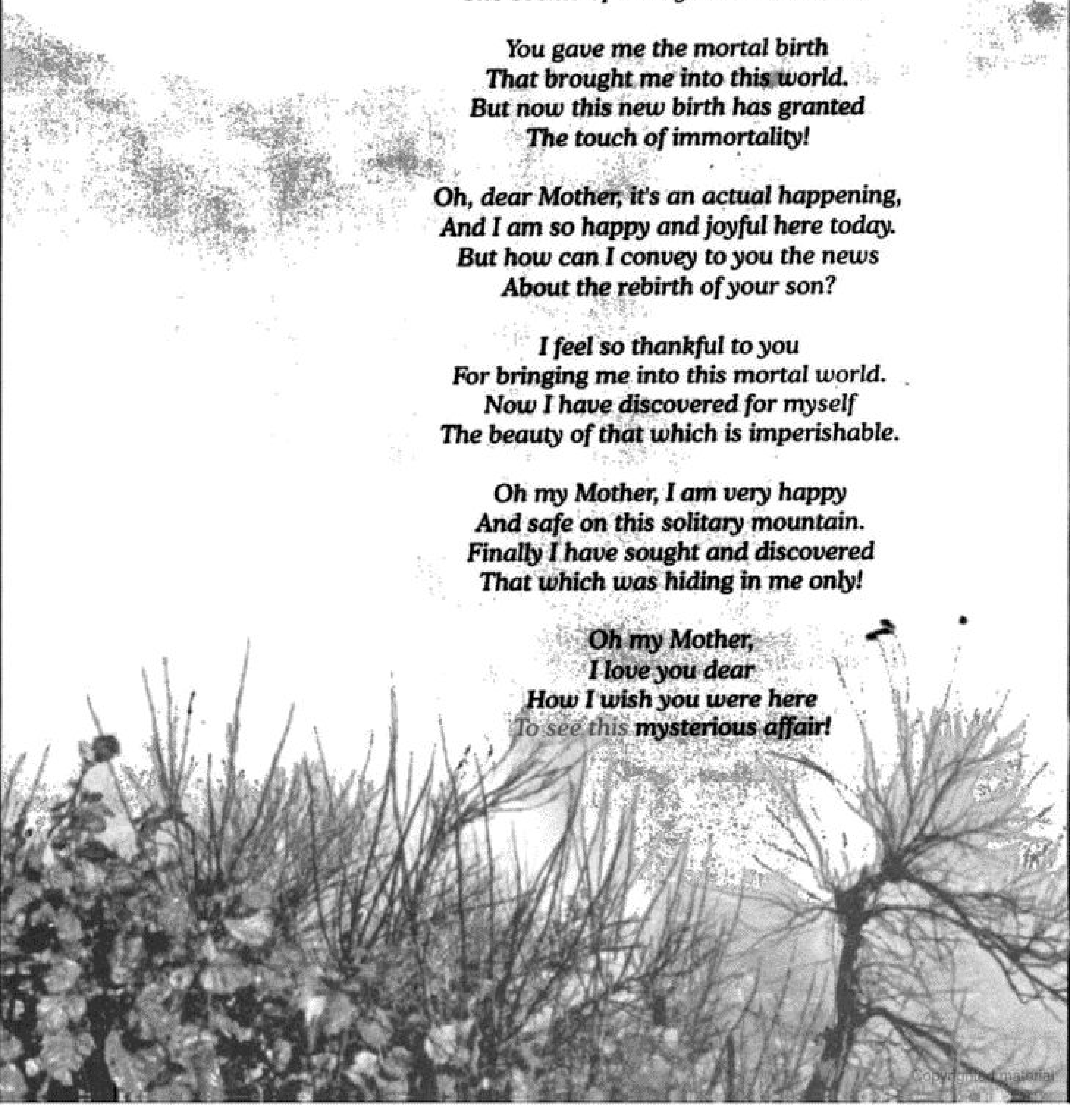
You gave me the mortal birth
That brought me into this world.
But now this new birth has granted
The touch of immortality!

Oh, dear Mother, it's an actual happening,
And I am so happy and joyful here today.
But how can I convey to you the news
About the rebirth of your son?

I feel so thankful to you
For bringing me into this mortal world.
Now I have discovered for myself
The beauty of that which is imperishable.

Oh my Mother, I am very happy
And safe on this solitary mountain.
Finally I have sought and discovered
That which was hiding in me only!

Oh my Mother,
I love you dear
How I wish you were here
To see this mysterious affair!



SIX

A CALL FROM MEHER BABA

Discerning the Truth

My way of life in the mountain hut went on without any hindrance or any physical problem. I felt quite energetic and healthy, although my diet was very poor. I cooked a small amount of rice each day at noon, ate some and kept a portion of it for my evening meal. Throughout my stay in my hut I ate nothing but plain rice. I never had any vegetables or butter, oil, milk or tea. I took my meals at noon and at 6:30 before it became dark. One of the villagers had given me a simple little oil lamp which I used very sparingly, and had to finish eating before nightfall. In the early evening I took walks around the mountaintop and sat on a rock to look down on the valley below, with its vast panorama and beautiful sunsets.

I had only a mat with me on which I would sit, eat, do my pondering, meditate and sleep. Water I fetched from the nearby pond to take a bath while sitting on a rock outside my hut. It was a quick bath of 2-3 minutes, in that open, windy place. I had never been used to taking a cold-water bath but now I poured cold water over my body, rubbed myself hastily with my bare hands and ran back into my hut, shivering all over. I did not have enough warm clothes so I would light the fire wood and sit huddled near it. In this simple life – austere some would say – I did not suffer in any way or miss anything in particular.

Sannyasis who lived in the nearby temple occasionally came to see me. They asked why I did not participate in prayers, poojas and chanting of devotional songs in the temple. I gave them short replies but did not generate any discussion. Basically, I was living in simplicity, remaining faithful to this newly discovered energy, without considering my likes and dislikes or my choices. Innocence and obedience to this new-dimensional force were necessary in order to cooperate with it.

My little hut was completely exposed to the fury of the elements, being situated right on the edge of the mountain. During the monsoon season, my tin roof often rattled in the strong gusty wind and was forever in danger of being blown away. It was also pelted by huge raindrops and sometimes by hailstones. Thunder, accompanied by lightning, often rocked the mountain and reverberated through the valley. It was therefore a relief when the rains began to abate.

As the monsoon season came to an end, the sky cleared of clouds and the sun became more bright and warm each day. The strong winds and bitter cold of the mountaintop were losing their bite as the season gradually changed. The sun came out showering its warmth, and it felt so good to stand in the morning sun. All around my hut and the surrounding mountain, Nature looked very pleasant and happy.

The mountaintop or tableland was covered with a green carpet, and the colorful little wildflowers lifted their heads to reveal their presence. Suddenly so many flowers everywhere, like the stars in the sky, began to glow with bright colors. They, too, looked quite happy in the sunlight, expressing their colorful joy. The monsoon had transformed the mountain and valleys below into a display of natural colors in various shades that filled the earth as well as the sky.

A small herd of cows and buffalos could occasionally be seen grazing happily in the abundance of tender green grass. Butterflies fluttering around everywhere displayed their rainbow colors. Their amazing designs and artistic shapes were lovely to look at. Honeybees busily visited the little flowers, collecting the pollen and carrying it back to their hives, hidden in remote places. The bulbuls, parrots and humming birds, with their resplendent colors and majestic feathers, flew around freely to collect little insects, seeds and nectar from flowers. This joyful activity of the different species with their humming, fluttering and chirping was like a symphony in Nature.

I felt myself to be a part and product of the same surrounding. No wonder I was reverberating and echoing the vibration of this enchanting place. Responding to these tunes into myself, I too became a part of Nature's symphony.

One afternoon a few weeks after this amazing explosion, as I sat upon the large rock outside my hut, a stranger came walking straight towards me. He approached and handed me a small piece of paper, introducing himself as a disciple of Meher Baba. He said that Baba had sent for me by means of this note. It contained only a few words: "Come to see me tomorrow before afternoon!"

The tone of the note surprised me, as it sounded almost like an order from a person that I had not met and about whom I never thought. He was a well-known spiritual master in India, so I had heard of him before. I asked the messenger where Baba lived now, and if he stayed nearby. I also asked how Baba knew about me, and why he wanted me to go to see him.

To that the messenger laughed and did not give me any answer! I became a little curious about this unexpected command. The whole situation made me very hesitant, and I did not give the messenger a specific reply. My meditative living on the mountain was going on well, and I had no wish to leave this place. Yet he had come all this way to take me to where this famous living saint held 'satsang' or a prayer meeting. Still I hesitated to accept the invitation.

In the evening I took my usual walk along the mountain cliff, and surprisingly I came across the head of the temple ashram. By now he knew me, so I told him about the message from Baba, and also about my hesitation to go.

To that he immediately exclaimed, "Meher Baba is a great saint, so you should not disregard his call". He also told me that Baba stayed not very far from the base of the mountain. He said I could go there and return easily the next day.

This conversation with the temple head helped me take the decision to go meet Baba with the messenger he had sent to fetch me. Early the next morning I left my hut and accompanied the guide.

Going down the mountain for the first time after five months of solitude affected me strongly. Our journey through the local villages felt almost as if I was entering a different world. We saw a country hotel on the roadside where loud music blared. After so many months in solitude, this style of living seemed awfully noisy and hectic to me. Yet the sound of old classical songs captivated me. We stopped for a while to listen to the music and to rest. Then we walked for about two more hours and finally arrived at Baba's encampment.

The guide took me to the main entrance, which led to the hall where Baba sat with maybe twenty people around him. Dressed in all white, he occupied a high seat. He was very fair, with flowing hair, sparkling eyes, and a long nose. For many years Baba had never spoken, and he communicated only in gestures. The interpreter at his side always explained the message.

The moment I entered the hall he raised his hand in front of him, pointing at me with a gesture, which meant "*I know you!*" And with a little smile he also proclaimed about himself: "*I am the Ancient One.*"

Then he instructed one of his devotees to take me to a room where I could wash and rest. He told me to meet him at four o'clock in the afternoon. I left the hall with the devotee. The long walk to his Ashram had made me quite tired, so I had a bath and relaxed. There was a full size mirror in the room and I was surprised to see how different I looked, beard and all. Soon someone brought me a cup of tea. What a pleasant surprise – my first cup of tea in five months! They gave me a cot to lie on, and this, too, was a luxury for me, after sleeping for so long on the hard floor with only a thin mat. I lay down comfortably and pondered this surprising declaration from Baba: "I know you!" And that he was "The Ancient One."

After an hour or so someone came to inform me that he would bring me lunch. Ten minutes later he brought my food, which again surprised me. What a feast to the eyes after my months of only boiled rice. As if seeing food for the first time, I gazed at the colorful items on my big round plate, appreciated their beauty, felt grateful, and then ate heartily. I waited till 4 pm, the time fixed to see Meher Baba.

About that time his interpreter, Dubash, came to escort me to Baba's living room. We exchanged greetings, and I sat on the floor with Baba, his interpreter by my side. Baba gave me a broad smile and a very compassionate look. I saw his sparkling eyes from close quarters and was very impressed by his radiant face.

He inquired through the interpreter about my health, food and daily routine. He seemed especially surprised when I said I ate only rice two times a day, without any vegetables or milk. I said that it was alright for me, that I didn't want to spend much time going out to purchase food-articles and then cook them.

His first question was, "Are you happy living alone on the mountain?"

I replied, "Yes, I need this solitude."

Next he casually suggested, "If you stay here with me, I will give you everything that you want."

I answered, "Baba, I do not know what more I want in life now." He continued, "I would suggest that you stay with me, but on one condition."

Surprised, I looked at him and asked what the condition was.

Baba made a strong gesture with his hands and head, and his assistant interpreted, "Baba says that you will have to surrender completely to him and obey whatever he tells you. Even if he tells you to cut your throat, you will have to do it without hesitation!"

I was stunned by his suggestion, and utter silence filled the room for some time. Then I replied quietly, "Baba, it is very easy to become sentimental and say yes, I will do it. But I have not traveled on my path this way. If you suggest a convincing line of action, I would be the first to go along with that. But to do something because someone else says so, was never my way of life. I will not be able to do it wholeheartedly and honestly."

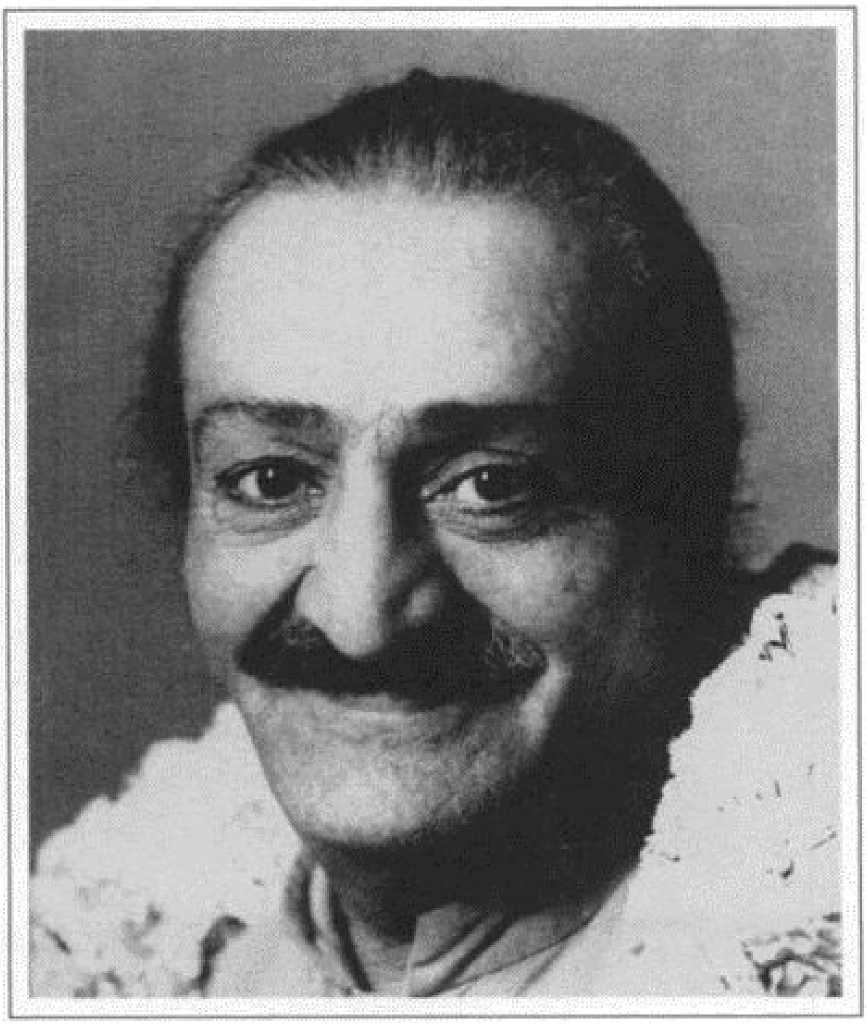
Again he looked at me, smiled and proclaimed, "Surrender and faith are very essential on the path. If you do as I suggest, I will give you all the spiritual riches for which you are searching."

Still seeing my hesitation he suggested, "Stay here for a few days, think it over, and then tell me what you would like to do."

At this point the meeting ended. Baba left for satsang in the main hall.

That night after dinner, some of his close disciples came into my room to inquire about my meeting with Baba. After hearing what I recounted, they told me that Baba had offered me a great opportunity, which I should not hesitate to accept. They advised, "We have been his disciples for many years, but he has never suggested any plan such as this or offered us such promises. He has never invited anyone like this. You are very fortunate. Accept his offer."

The next day I pondered over his offer, although I had seen my way and I was clear about it. Some thoughts of temptation crept into my mind, the idea of further spiritual benefits and an easy assured life. Yet I felt wholly clear about my current approach and way of living. A part of me considered the persuasive arguments of his disciples, while another part of me observed it all very aloofly.



Avatar Meher Baba - a popular saint who observed silence for more than 20 years.

I saw all these temptations of an easy assured life, good food etc. But at the same time I felt that at any cost I had to guard the new little spark which kept glowing silently within me. Any other diversion would be the denial of that innerness. My mountaintop experience and resulting understanding made me look objectively in order to evaluate Meher Baba's offer. Otherwise I could have been caught up in the promise of future security and spiritual riches. Some part of my mind kept suggesting that I accept this easy, assured life at his ashram. To have a living saint's guidance, his promise of a secure future, an easy and comfortable lifestyle - all this was a ripple of temptation.

Yet, the other perception showed me clearly that this was not the way for me. *One cannot really depend on anybody, however great he may be. The real approach is to depend honestly on one's own inner perception, and my recent experience on Sajjangad had given me that new understanding*. This convinced me that I would have to be on my own, not following anyone.

Meher Baba's offer indeed posed a challenge. After living on the mountain for five long months, without any facilities or amenities, I came and stayed with him for three days, enjoying delicious food as well as a comfortable bed and other small luxuries. Then, on top of all this, he promised a spiritually fulfilling future. All this sudden change did influence my mind a little bit. But my first-hand experience of the inner, of this explosion and the new-dimensional energy, helped me maintain balance and clarity.

Hereafter, nobody's promises would tempt me. I would have to walk on my own, along the path toward an unknown destination. *This path has no promises, no hopes, no signboards or goals. It is a journey of being in the present, which is the only reality of life. I realized that there is nothing like reaching anywhere.* All I had to do is to remain constantly in the present with the totality of my own energy.

Baba's promise of giving me spiritual riches surely sounded alluring. But now I saw clearly that it was not for me. His assurance of a comfortable place to live in did not have any value to me. His offer of helping me to reach a spiritual goal also lost its appeal. I reconciled with myself and decided to go back to my hut, to be on my own.

Accordingly, I informed Baba honestly about my feeling regarding his offer. He smiled gently and said, "In the future, whenever you feel like coming here, you will be welcome." To my surprise, he also suggested that I should go to see my mother. I respectfully thanked him for taking such keen interest in me and for his kind suggestion. Thereafter I took my leave and returned to my mountain hut.

After arriving at Sajjangad I started pondering over the whole drama of this trip. How did Meher Baba know about my presence on the mountain? This remained quite a mystery to me. Did he really want me to stay with him or was he trying to test me?

As a result of this I did become aware of desires and ambitions still lingering in me. He did in fact help me to see myself clearly, and assisted me in strengthening my honest dedication to my inner being. In such a situation one cannot arrive at a decision through a choice by the mind, for that can be deceptive and illusory.

One has to depend only on one's inner voice, the voice of silence within, which becomes eloquent. That inner perception or understanding, which comes from the silence of the mindless state, is more honest and reliable.

I stayed in the mountain hut for two more months. During that time, I was more intensely observant of environmental influences, particularly the subtle temptations that arise unexpectedly. The desire for comfort, security, recognition in spiritual circles and greed for further spiritual gains can all entice one on this slippery path, creating a new hope and aspiration. The mind, still alive, carries a wide variety of arrows in its quiver and uses them cleverly, according to the need of the occasion. Sharp awareness and clear understanding must therefore be one's constant companions along the way. This was the big lesson that I learned from my visit to Meher Baba, which proved to be a blessing in disguise.

It had been almost seven months since I left my family home in Thane. Now the need to visit my mother to tell her about my well-being became stronger day by day. I felt that Meher Baba's suggestion to go see my mother was very practical. My time to leave the mountain had come.

SEVEN

FAREWELL TO MOUNT SAJJANGAD

A Passion to Find the Hidden Dimension

On the day of leaving my place on the mountain, I tried to store that humble hut in my eyes and heart. My long stay in that solitary dwelling and the experiences of those seven months had created a subtle bond of benevolent relationship. With the fact of leaving I became unusually emotional in the spirit of thankfulness, as I wanted to carry the image of my room with me. My time spent there had indeed been very eventful and fruitful.

So much happened there in such a short time. This little room of 7x9 feet was my nest for the last seven months, providing me with warmth and shelter. Emotions, worries and fears had flared high and struck me like tornadoes. Then I also experienced peace, tranquility and ecstasy. Jubilation over my rebirth was celebrated here. In this humble hut I experienced the divine energy and lived with it intimately.

Yet the time had come to leave my cozy room. I touched the wooden frame of the threshold and saluted my nest. Then with gratitude I picked up a pinch of earth from the steps to put on my forehead with humility and reverence, and turned with tearful eyes to the narrow trail that led to the temple.

First I went to the people of the ashram to thank them for all their cooperative considerations in providing me with the hut and giving me the liberty of living there in my own way. In the beginning when I had gone to request it, the ashram management was in no way prepared to let me live in that hut, away from the regular temple compound. The manager had been very hesitant to let me be in that remote spot. Later he confided to me that because I had come in wearing a fine suit and hat, he could not really imagine me living alone in that tiny, dark and remote old place.

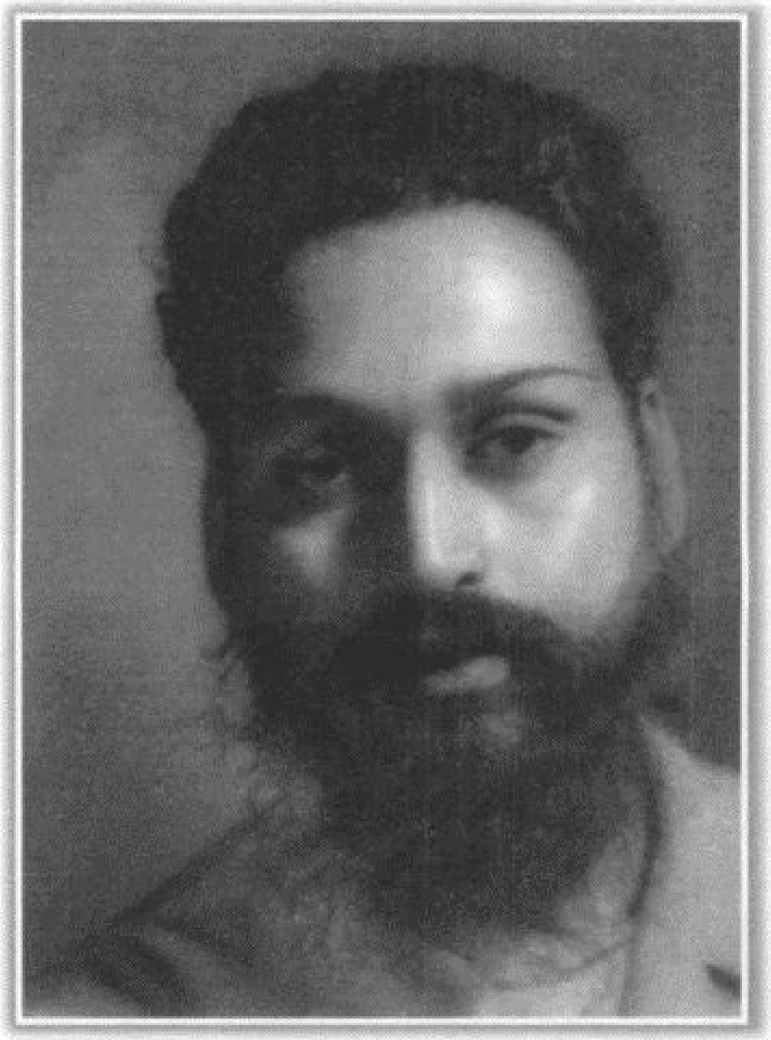
Now when I went to say good-bye to the manager, he told me that I appeared somehow a changed person, not just my clothing and beard, but that he saw a distinct difference in me. Other disciples of the ashram came to greet me, and they expressed that same feeling. They were not able to pinpoint what type of change it was, but they did recognize a difference. Indeed I knew in myself that I had gone through a deep change within, so I felt happy to hear their confirming comments!

They became curious and began asking me many questions, especially about what the change in me was and what I had been doing up there alone all this time. Some of them had been staying at the ashram for ten or more years, sincerely working on spiritual understanding in a more traditional way. They were consumed by their disciplines, prayers and chanting, but they were not at all open to any other approach.

One disciple finally asked me specifically what had been my spiritual practice and routine. They knew that I did not visit the temple, nor did I participate in the daily pooja, prayers and other festivities. They never saw me reading the classical religious books or chanting, nor did they find me discussing or debating with anyone else. So they all were very curious and eager to know what I had done in that deserted little cabin, by myself all those months. Seeing the eagerness of those 'sannyasis' or ascetics and their questioning minds, I sat with them for some time to open a dialogue and tell them more about me and my inner journey.

I told them, "There is nothing one has to do but be free from all the doings of the mind – its imaginations, attachments, temptations and habit patterns. This ceaseless activity of mind, even in the name of religion and spirituality, is itself a hindrance. If one can see the limitations as well as the binding nature of mind-emotion activities, and remain free from them, then perhaps there is a possibility of discovering the inner silence. *In-depth silence of the total energy is the gate through which real spiritual change enters*".

"This is such a beautiful place," I observed, "where one can remain quiet and peaceful, in order to see that the real disquiet is within ourselves only. One has to learn the art of being with oneself, free from the constant activity of the habitual mind. Only then is there the possibility of becoming free from the desires, traditions and domination of our wishful mind. One can then discover the quietude of inner being. That is the challenge – the discovery of one's inner being. That alone is the basis of spiritual life. Anything else is only an indulgence of mind. That is why I remained away from all the ritualistic activities basically created by people in the name of religion. The urgency within me has always been for the discovery of the spirit, my inner being."



After the seven months of solitude in the Mountain Hut

At this point one of the seekers spoke up and said, "You mention urgency, which is different from sincerity. We here are all sincere seekers, genuinely wanting to change, and have come here for just that. But why do you talk about urgency?"

At first I didn't know how to begin to answer his unexpected question. It took me back a long way, to my formative years, my disenchantment with mundane life and yearning for change. Then another seeker said, "We remember when you showed up here in your fancy clothes and hat, asking to live way out in that lonely place, all by yourself. We thought you would probably not last there long, just a young city guy." Some of the sannyasis smiled in remembrance.

The temple manager added, "I've talked to you a few times since that first day, and I have always wondered where you came from, too. Now your face and everything else about you have changed, not just your clothes!"

I smiled at his friendship and care, this man who had twice firmly refused me my hut! He laughed and continued mischievously, "You've stayed away from here for all these months. Now you must spend a little time and tell us something about yourself, what got you up to Sajjangad."

I was always hesitant to talk about myself. But seeing their curiosity and considering it was parting time, I decided to say a few words. So in the spirit of gratitude, I sat down to tell them about the young city man who had arrived fashionably dressed, seeking solitude on this mountaintop.

Breaking the Silence

"I can understand your curiosity about me," I began. "I am Dattaram Gavand from Thane. Yes, I would be glad to share some of my experiences with you."

I continued, "I came from a well-to-do family, and we never lacked food, clothing or the necessities of life. My father was a businessman in Thane, outside of Mumbai. I received an education only up to high school matriculation (Grade Eleven). Then my father died unexpectedly, when I was only 18 years old. This sudden and tragic calamity affected me deeply. It brought a number of major changes in our family and many added responsibilities for me. Gradually, I began to carry out all his duties, being the eldest son.

"As the days passed, one Sunday morning I was cleaning the shelves of my father's library. We had servants to do the cleaning and household chores, yet

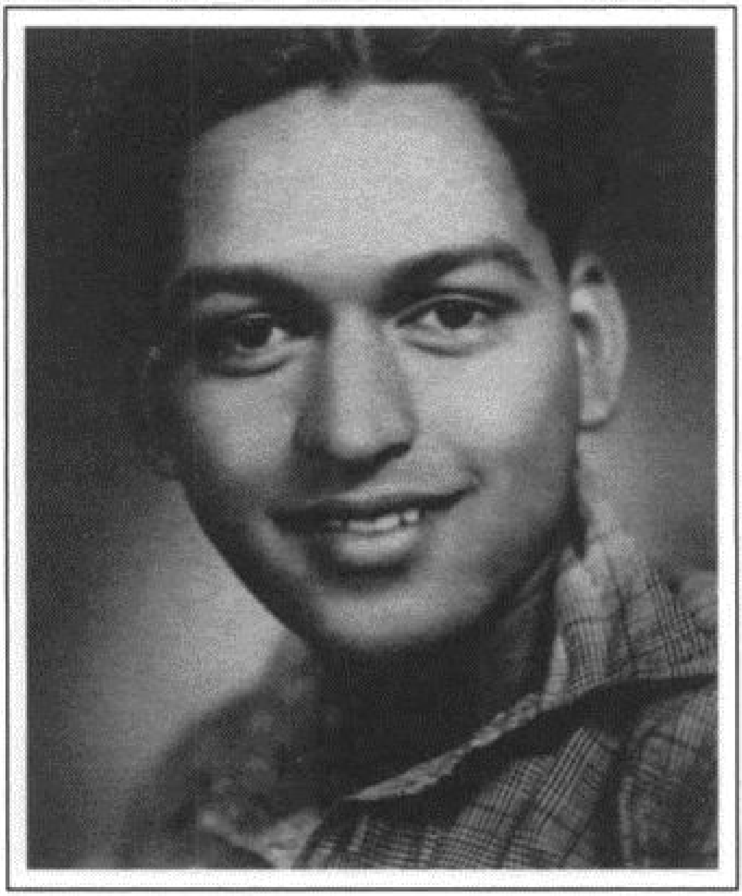
I felt somehow drawn to his library. My father had a good collection of books on religion and philosophy, but I did not have much interest in any of these. I was only dusting and dutifully putting them in order.

"Occasionally I noticed some of the titles and casually looked at the contents of a few books. I had gone through several that way. Then I came across the title '*Theosophy and Life's Deeper Problems*', a small booklet of four lectures by Dr. Annie Bessant. I started thumbing through it somewhat superficially to see what it was all about. I knew Dr. Bessant to be a political leader but not a religious teacher. My interest lay in politics and social reform in those days, so I became curious to see what she would have to say about life's deeper problems.

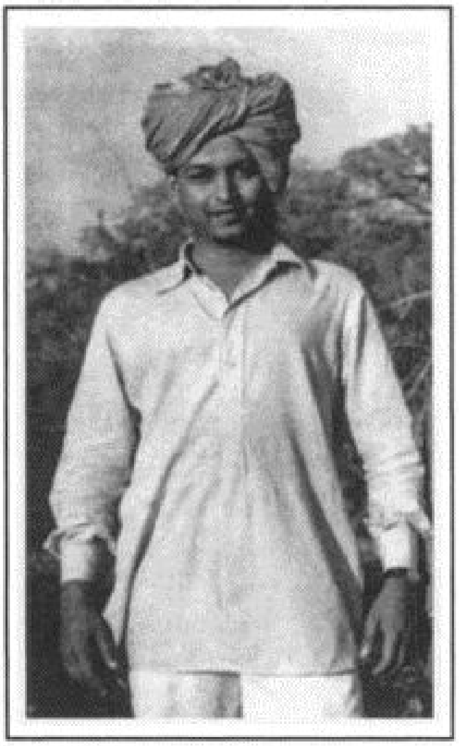
"I opened it and read a few paragraphs at random. The book discussed some verses from the '*Upanishads*,' the Indian texts of ancient wisdom, and explored their relevance to current living. She pointed out that there is a deeper level to life, that life is not merely the day-to-day activities that we know. There exist subtle currents of energy, 'planes' as she called them, and that discovering these deeper levels is very important. This discovery, she said, is the only thing that would make life worthwhile and meaningful. She tried to explain that some of these hidden levels could be discovered through a practice called meditation.

"It all sounded very fascinating to me. Her argument was based on sound logic, so that caught my attention. I realized this lady had a point because of her clear writing, which was so thoughtful and easy to understand. Eagerly I read on to know her views. The little book took hold of me, and it kept me right there in the library reading more. I just got lost in it, and became aware of my surroundings only when my mother entered to call me for lunch. I pleaded with her to wait with the food for a little while. Fifteen minutes later she came back to get me, finding me still engrossed in reading. Most reluctantly, I took a short break as I was delaying my mother for lunch. After lunch, I returned eagerly to the book and put it down only after I had finished reading it from cover to cover.

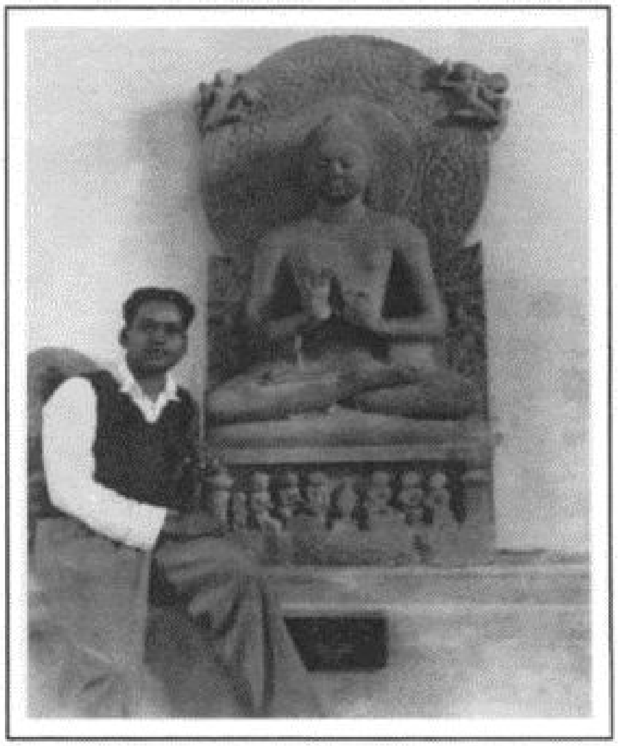
"It surprised me how that little book aroused my curiosity to discover what those deeper, unseen levels of life are. Unseen planes? New energy currents? By the end of the day, I had finished that book and eagerly looked for more on the subject. Suddenly my interest soared to read other books in my father's collection.



At 16 : absorbed in sports and academics at school



As a young wrestler



As a seeker in younger days

"Before that I had never been seriously attracted to religious books, instead staying busy with sports, school and hunting. However, this book gave me the idea of something deeper in life. It stirred my curiosity and my intellect. Later I inquired about the Theosophical Society and read more about it, becoming even more curious to find out whether there is some mysterious purpose to life. These books talked about an unseen, hidden level. How intriguing!

"My town of Thane had a small Theosophy Center, a group of six people. So I contacted the President, Mr. R.S. Bhagvat and borrowed some books. Mr. Bhagvat told me he had known my father very well and that my father had in fact been a serious reader of Theosophy. My curiosity and interest grew, thinking I was on to something important!

"The Theosophical Society had a scientific and fresh way of explaining the ancient religious books and the truths contained in them. A traditional religious approach did not appeal to me, but the Theosophical Society had a logical view. I became greatly attracted to Theosophy like a duck to water. Annie Bessant was known as a political leader who advocated the independence of India, and I, as a young freedom fighter, actively helped in the struggle for political freedom. Although an English woman, Annie Bessant worked for Indian freedom, so her name and approach attracted me. Thus began my inquiry into spiritual philosophy. Through Theosophy I tried to understand Indian mysticism.

"After reading a number of other books by Dr. Bessant, I finally went to visit the Theosophical Society headquarters in Chennai. Later, I attended their International Conventions in Chennai and Varanasi. Seven of us more enthusiastic and interested in Theosophy – Mr. Bhagvat, Mr. Bhave, Mr. Dhage, Mr. and Mrs. Randive, Mr. Tatke – listened to many lectures and went for group discussions in Mumbai and Pune.

"Still I wanted to learn more about Theosophy, so I asked the president of the local group to have more meetings apart from their Sunday gathering. At that time I served as secretary of the Thane branch of the Theosophical Society. I made an arrangement to host an additional class for the group every Wednesday at my house so that we could study the basic texts of Theosophy specially written by Madame Blavatsky. Almost all the members used to attend the sessions held at my house, and a few outsiders and friends too came along. It was a good group of interested people. This attempt gave a new boost to the study of Theosophy in the then small town of Thane.

"While studying these books, we read about the discovery of a man named Jiddu Krishnamurti. He had been 'found' at the very young age of six or seven by Dr. Leadbetter, a leading Theosophist. He claimed that he saw Krishnamurti's astral body and predicted him to be not an ordinary human being but rather a highly refined soul destined to give the world a new spiritual message. All these stories stimulated my already intense curiosity, and I became eager to see and hear this person.

"One day my friend Mr. Bhave, who was a member of the Theosophical Society and who also played cricket with me, informed me that Krishnamurti had come to Mumbai and would be giving lectures soon. We were excited about this news and the possibility of seeing and hearing Krishnamurti in person. Mr. Bhave, his wife Kusum and I left very early by car the morning that he would be speaking in Mumbai. We went full of enthusiasm and expectations about this very special man.

"I remember how we were all seated on the floor awaiting his arrival. Soon entered a person wearing a long white shirt or kurta. His face was serene, his movements precise and full of energy. He had a long sharp nose and an unusual sparkle in his eyes. Gracefully, he seated himself casually on a raised platform in lotus pose, his spine straight. A gentle smile radiated from his face as he greeted the audience in Indian-style salutation.

"Krishnamurti's first talk left a deep and lasting impression on me, although I could hardly comprehend it fully. From that moment on I was very much drawn to him. Subsequently, I listened to many of his talks and enthusiastically read his books. Through him I began to be aware of the limitation of collected knowledge based on past tradition.

"Looking at Theosophy, I recognized that it represented a slow, evolutionary way, with a promise always in the future. It said one has to develop virtues one by one. For instance, to get rid of anger one has to become more virtuous and loving, polish oneself and bring about a kind of purity in life. Only then would it be possible to take the next step. This procedure involved basically a time process. In Krishnamurti I saw someone who questioned the time process. He spoke of spontaneous action in the present. This challenge of the now, to be in the immediate present, had a greater attraction for me.

"Slowly I noticed that the people in the Theosophical Society, although good, well-behaved men and women, remained contented and happy with their day-to-day lives. They demonstrated no revolutionary spirit to make a fundamental change in life. Mostly intellectuals, they appeared happy with their conclusions and lifestyles. Their change would be gradual, evolutionary, intellectual, submitting to the 'karmic' process, or cosmic law with no urgency or passion for bringing about a deeper change.

"On the other hand, Krishnamurti's approach struck me as being more revolutionary, and to my young mind that had greater appeal. I visited other gurus and sages of the time and heard what they, too, had to say, because now I had an openness and interest in spirituality. But my pull was centered more on what Krishnamurti shared.

"After a couple of years of listening to Krishnaji frequently in public talks, I was emboldened to meet him in person. A bit impatient about myself, I had a strong feeling that my personal life was not really changing according to my understanding and intellectual clarity. This fact started worrying me a bit. I began to see some kind of gap between my understanding and my actions, a contradiction between learning and living. What I learned did not express itself in actual living. It disturbed me to see this fact in myself.

"And so, to have a little more understanding, I decided to seek an interview with Krishnaji to see if he could help me with this dilemma. I felt very nervous and shy about meeting him in person, but I finally mustered my courage and went to see him in Pune.

"It was early in the morning and Krishnaji sat alone in the brightly lit room, waiting to give private interviews to seekers. I entered the room falteringly, not knowing how to conduct myself and where to begin. However Krishnaji's vibrant presence, kind face and earnest bearing encouraged me to drop all formalities and come straight to the point. I said to him, 'Sir, I am trying to understand, by reading your books and attending your talks, but it is still very difficult for me to capture the whole meaning of your words'. I added, 'I know you are pointing toward something which is not quite tangible. You are pointing toward some unknown, and I am struggling to reach it. But even the attempt seems futile. Many times I feel frustrated about all my efforts. Is it because I am eager and impatient?' I asked.

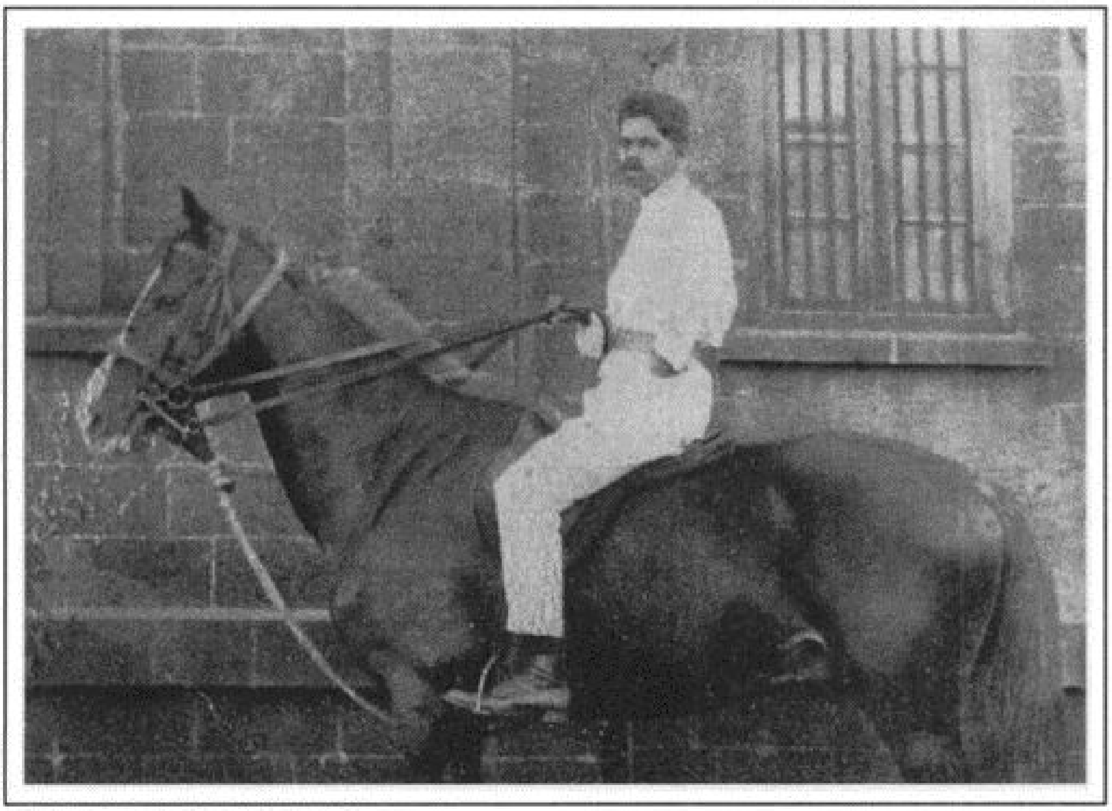
"Krishnaji said, 'I can see your urge, and your impatience is very important. Actually it is an asset. Now be a little patient. If you have time, come to the other places where I will be speaking. Attend the camps at Rajmundri, Varanasi and Chennai. Take your time, attend these camps, and you will understand.'

"This calmed me down quite a bit. Since he suggested going to the camps, I eventually did, following him to three different places throughout India. I even went to listen to him in Ceylon, a very long trip in those days. That is how I tried to follow, understand and give my concentrated attention to this task that I saw before me ever more urgently.

"Thanks to this interview and the subsequent trips, I began to sense that true understanding is not an intellectual process. It is not a philosophy of any kind. It is the challenge of discovering the limits of one's own mind, how the mind itself is the hindrance in experiencing the reality of life. The discovery of the truth is a challenge that one has to take by oneself. Nobody else can give this understanding.

"Gradually I came to see that this discovery involves a search unto oneself. I began to see that books are not going to help much, nor will a leader or philosopher ultimately help either. I acknowledged that each person has to take this challenge of discovery himself. It cannot be a half-hearted job, but an honest attempt involving one's total energy.

"This looked like it would be a monumental task. Finally I saw the challenge clearly. It helped me look objectively at my personal life and also at society and the world at large. It was for the first time that I glimpsed the fragmentary and illusory nature of my mind. I saw how this apparatus is so



My father, all set for a ride

With my mother and sister in the year 1932 conditioned, cunning and limited. *Now my life itself finally became my challenge, and that involved a big transition in perception.*

"I often stayed away from my home for long periods to attend Krishnamurti's talks and meetings. As a result the business side of my responsibility got very neglected. Some of my relatives and elderly people in the family criticized my wandering all over India, but I felt very happy about what was happening in my life and to my understanding. I stood ready to accept the challenge of my life.

The Hunter Hunted Down

"During this same time I belonged to a small group of hunters in Thane, consisting of two doctors, three lawyers, my uncle and me. We often went hunting in the mountain forest a few miles outside of town. It was a hobby and pastime, more for enjoyment than anything else. Generally we searched for wild boar and deer. Sometimes we shot smaller game like wild ducks and also rabbits.

"One Sunday, we were all out hunting, looking for wild boars because that is the biggest prize. Generally, we went after the big animals. But then if we didn't get anything big, we looked for the smaller ones. That particular day our hunting expedition was not very lucky. We did not get any big game after searching the forest for three hours. Tired and somewhat dejected, we walked through the bushes as usual, trying to flush out some game.

"Suddenly, I saw a big rabbit loitering playfully in the distance. I stood perfectly still, hiding quietly behind a bush. The rabbit came running in my direction, and when I knew it to be within range, I took aim and fired. But this time my shot was not very accurate. A number 4 cartridge usually kills a rabbit instantly, yet this time it failed. Perhaps I fired a bit too soon at the running rabbit, as it is difficult to take precise aim at animals on the run. In any case it was not a fatal shot. The rabbit was only wounded and fell down. It started moving and jumping frantically in order to escape. The rabbit let out a high-pitched squeal while struggling wildly as it was badly injured.

"Ordinarily I would have quickly fired a second bullet to finish him off. But something in me hesitated, preventing me from firing the second shot. I ran over to where the rabbit writhed in pain, and I came close to him. He was limping and jumping in a last effort to survive. I saw the fear in his eyes, in every jerk of his body. In those few seconds I became intensely aware of the dying animal's fight for life. I saw the rabbit with my whole being, perceiving his acute desperation. But I did not perceive which the eyes of a hunter, who would have just killed it immediately. Instead I hesitated and stopped. Something in me whispered quietly, 'What right do I have to take the life of this little one? Is it only because I have a large gun in my hand?'

"I saw very clearly my aggressive mind of a hunter. And I kept wondering how I could be so cruel to this little animal, inflicting so much pain on it. It was attempting to survive, maybe for its family. The thought also came that maybe it was a female with baby rabbits, out looking for food to feed them. Was this a sane act on my part to destroy this animal living in freedom in its forest? Something in my head snapped. For a short time I stood paralyzed and half dazed. In that moment I was free of the gun culture, the arrogance, the aggressive hunter-mind. I felt repentant and doubted my right to 'murder' this innocent animal.

"Generally we returned home joyously after a kill. But this time I felt no elation over my hunting victory of killing this rabbit. I had shot many animals and birds, but never before had I felt like this after a successful hunt. The whole incident made me very introverted. My other hunter friends had shot a deer, and they were happy about the rabbit as well as the deer. But something in me had turned sad and nervous. I didn't know exactly what was going on, but I definitely did not feel joyful as did my other hunter friends.

"Afterward, we usually went home and cooked the game that we had bagged. However that night I could not eat that poor rabbit. The cook had prepared everything very well, but I did not consume any of it. My mother saw that I was not happy that night; instead I was solemn. I told her all about how I felt after I shot the rabbit and why I could not touch my dish. Seeing my sadness, she tried to console me. She said, 'You need not take that dish now. I will save your food for tomorrow's lunch.'

"That night when I went to bed, I was not able to sleep for quite some time. I was struggling with this incident. A kind of battle was going on inside me. I was good at athletics and all kinds of sports, having been a champion sportsman in high school. But I was suddenly appalled by the brutality of hunting as a sport.

Encroaching on the territory of animals, shooting at long range and hunting down small innocent game as well as wild animals all began to seem extremely savage. I questioned the rationality of this particular sport. What right do I have to encroach on their natural habitat where they are living peacefully? To kill them brutally and consume their blood and flesh, with relish, was barbaric and inhuman. I decided to give up hunting and get out of this savage, aggressive activity.

"The next day at breakfast I told my mother that hereafter I would not eat any kind of flesh, and that the previous day's hunt was my last. She started to argue with me, but I told her firmly that I had resolved to never again go hunting to slaughter animals, and furthermore I would not eat the flesh of any animal from that day onward.

"This came as a great surprise and real shock to my mother. She actually became angry, asking what had happened to me, why I wanted to take this drastic step. My mother said, 'I can understand if you don't want to eat it today, but why give up meat forever?' I talked to her about my feelings and decision, reminding her that on our farm we had vegetables, milk, and plenty of fruits to eat. So why do we have to slay animals, to destroy their natural freedom, just to enjoy the taste of their flesh? I told her I felt that hunting and eating flesh were not good things to indulge in.

"Because ours was traditionally a meat-eating household, this new feeling in me was all the more unusual. But my resolve persisted. And with it came a clarity that no more hunting and no more meat eating definitely were the right things for me to do.

"This decision created a lot of discussion in the house. All the family members pressured me to change my mind. They advised me not to do this, that it would affect my health, that I would get weak and sick and so forth. They even informed our family doctor about my decision. The doctor actually came over to the house and tried to persuade me not to stop eating meat all at once. He said that I was just inviting trouble by doing this. Both by birth and by tradition our family and caste ate meat; that was our way of life. The doctor said that this sudden change would affect my body and general health, bringing me trouble. I replied to him that if some problem came as a result of my decision, I would pay

Elated over my first hunt

Shooting a rabbit: a turning point

that price for having committed this wrong act of killing animals for all these years. I said I stood ready to accept the penalty of weakness or illness.

"Nobody could succeeded in persuading me to change my mind. My point remained that there was no fairness in hunting, that it was totally unjust to kill animals in their rightful dwelling for the purpose of eating their flesh. In spite of pressure from all quarters, I remained very resolute and strong about it.

"So the word went out in our circle of hunter friends that I had decided not to hunt or eat meat. They were all surprised and tried to find out what was wrong with me, what sudden fit of fancy had overtaken me. Many times I explained to my friends why I stopped eating meat. But even after talking with them, none of them really felt it the way I did; they did not understand me. So they decided to leave me alone for a few days, thinking I would come to my senses and go back to my usual ways. But that didn't happen. There was no going back.

"Hunting and eating flesh completely vanished from my thoughts and activities. Seeing the dying rabbit had been a complete experience, a revelation about the relationship of the animal world with me. I was known as an animal lover in those days, having my own poultry farm with new and different breeds of chickens. I even owned fighting cocks, which people used for the sport of gambling. I had dogs for hunting and retrieving prey. I used to attend to their needs and love them.

"After the experience of the rabbit I began to see how I loved some animals, even fed them myself, but with others I was eager to kill mercilessly and then eat them! How is it that I felt so drawn to some animals while being so cruel to others? It created a conflict in me. For a while there was inner turmoil as I pondered this contradiction.

"As the days passed, I realized that I never got sick or weak, as so many had warned. No more did I crave meat – not at all. Psychologically also, it just went out of my system. It never came into my mind again that I should eat flesh; it was completely gone. And I glimpsed that when something is completely understood and perceived in its totality, it gets erased from consciousness. It doesn't leave any memory; there is no craving for or remnant of it. For the first time I saw something so clearly and fully that the change occurred cleanly, without struggle.

"From then on I began to lose contact with my hunter friends. There had been quite a group of us, but we didn't go on those hunting trips together anymore. To put an end to my gun-culture, I decided to return my gun to the government. In those days, having an official license to keep a gun was socially very prestigious. But suddenly I felt it to be quite the contrary. I decided to surrender my license as well as the gun to the District Collector. It was a sophisticated double-barrel gun with an in-built rifle capacity. I could easily have sold the gun in the market and it would have fetched a handsome price. But I was strongly averse to the idea of selling the gun and making some money out of it. So I straight away surrendered the gun and thereby experienced a great sense of relief.

"That aspect of my life – of hunting and eating meat – ended. I made a resolve and remained with it. Rather, the perception became the deciding force, and I stayed faithful to my insight. That perception showed me the reality of the situation, and the strength of it put an end to the activities of hunting and eating flesh. That gave me a new kind of clarity and the confidence to adhere to my decision. I knew that what I was doing was right. I was sure their fears were unfounded, prompted by their anxiety. The clarity gave me confidence as well as strength.

"With this I experienced a new insight. It made me change in a way I never expected. Furthermore, it was not a superficial intellectual insight. This little rabbit had affected my ego, my mind, and watching its last struggle for life had changed me profoundly. Thereafter I became more aware of the natural world of both animals and plants. I developed a new perspective of this whole episode, a growing sensitivity. And I understood a little more about myself, too, how our actions are so chronic, so traditional, and it is only through our past habits that we live life. I had been conditioned to behave as I did without ever thinking about why or what I did. Now I became more aware about my beliefs and family influences, and how these affected and dictated my way of living.

"That opened me up in a new way. I had not been able to see things exactly as they are because of the veil of conditioning. Now I realized that Life has a profound inner depth that understands outer problems quietly. We may ignore the depth, but it does not mean that Life is only the superficial, self-centered activities that we grow up with.

"The culture of hunting and meat eating had been an ingrained part of me. But as a result of seeing the act of hunting in its totality, my hunter nature disappeared completely. I still participated in many sports and social activities, including politics and the independence movement. All the while I was seeing my activities and conditioning more clearly, pondering deeply about all of this, and recognizing that any real change would have to involve the whole of my life. "

Seeking Turns Inwards

Here I paused, watching the faces of the sannyasis as they absorbed this account of my youth – the social worker and politician, the avid sportsman and courageous freedom fighter, and at last the hunter who himself had been hunted down and transformed by his prey!

One of the seekers asked me, "Dada, it is a big challenge to change one's whole life! How did you start to deal with it all? It seems sometimes that there are just too many parts and too many responsibilities."

"Yes, it does seem so" I answered him, "especially when we look only at the parts and see them as the problems."

So I went on to recount how the hunter from Thane ended up on Sajjangad Mountain, living apart from them in solitude.

"My life," I reflected, "had posed a challenge in many ways for some time. Since my father had died early, I as the eldest son had to assume more and more responsibilities in his place. My sisters and brother needed to be educated. Then I had to see to their marriages. As you know, parents choose the bride or groom. I was serious about sincerely carrying out this responsibility and other family duties.

"Thus I avoided getting married because of family commitments. At this time the spiritual aspect was emerging but was not yet overwhelmingly strong. The welfare of my family continued to be more important to me. Later, after my two sisters were married, I was under pressure to arrange for my own marriage.

But I put that off to ensure the welfare of my younger brother and three remaining sisters first.

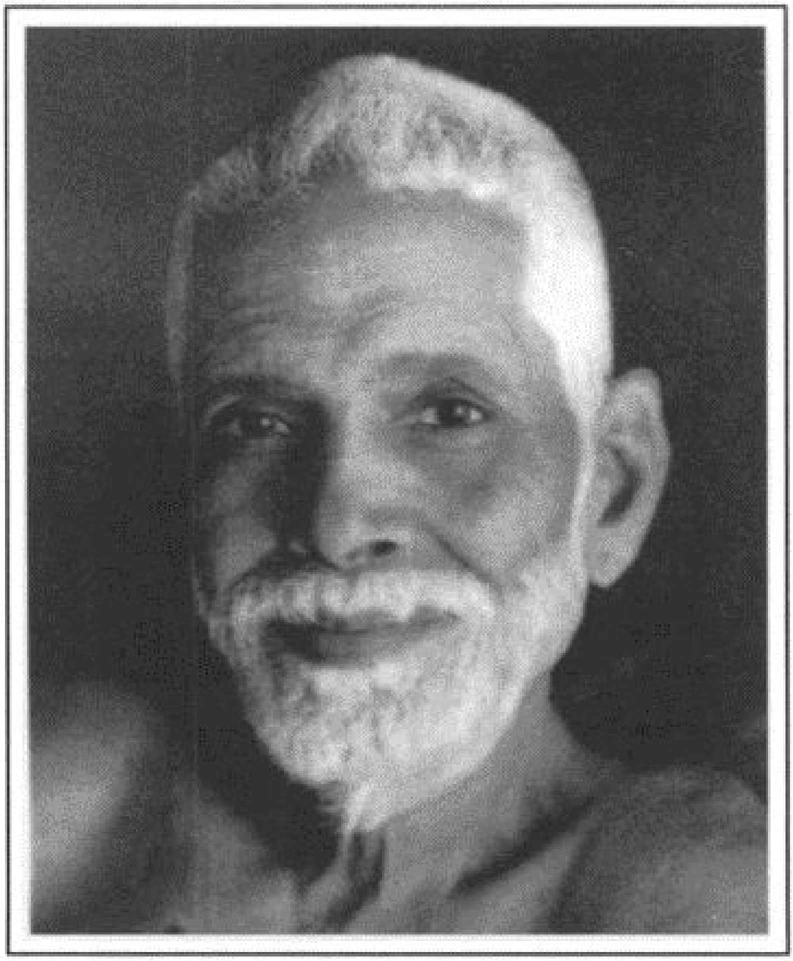
"As the years passed, I started seeing a wider horizon of life. I noted the advantages as well as the limitations of married life. It became apparent how marriage is a strong binding factor. Every now and then my mother suggested that I should get married, but I did not respond with much enthusiasm. Despite my lack of interest, my mother assumed that eventually I would be ready for this step. Sometimes I went through a subtle conflict about marrying, but it became clearer and clearer that this encumbrance would not be the way for me.

"During this time I had to pay serious attention to the business as well as to my family members. Arranging the marriages of my younger sisters continued to be an important issue. I applied my mind to all these pressing problems, so the marriages were successfully accomplished and the family business carried on in good order.

"In some way still unhappy with myself and impatient, I spent much time searching for the answers to the basic questions of life. Although I was a good man by most standards of society, I found myself to be mundane and incomplete. Life was not challenging, and very little of it mattered at all.

"Finally, I went to visit Ramana Maharshi at Arunachalam near Chennai. On Maharshi's kind suggestion, I stayed there with him for three days, and we talked through an interpreter. I could see that Maharshi was an extraordinary person. His face radiated something almost indescribable, and he seemed to be very far off, as if not there. I was particularly struck by his simplicity, austere living and deep humility. I had the privilege of having meals with him on all the three days of my stay. I also heard some of the dialogues between him and visitors to the ashram. Repeatedly, Maharshi urged seekers to go back to the 'Source', the 'I', in a spirit of inquiry. He stressed the need to stand back and ask oneself who is angry, unhappy, jealous, etc., instead of being engulfed by such emotional states when they arise in oneself. Given my youth and inexperience, I couldn't get much out of the discussions. I left only with a mysterious feeling, and I remember his eyes and face, with their far-away expression.

"From there I went to Pondicherry ashram, where 700 to 800 people lived. Shri Aurobindo was living there in solitude at that time, so I could not see him. I met Mother in the ashram and spent a short while there also, listening to discussions and talking with seekers. From Chennai I left to see the ancient temples of South India, visiting Kanchipuram, Tirupathi, and Jagannathpuri, and then I travelled down to reach the famous temples of Rameshwaram and Kanyakumari. I returned home with the satisfaction of having met some enlightened persons and visited holy places.



Ramana Maharshi : an embodiment of humility and compassion

"Thus I was busy with my life as a householder and seeker when one day my friend Mr. Bhave gave me the news that Krishnamurti would be coming back to India from talks abroad. This time he would hold a special camp at Pune. We could make lodging and boarding arrangements for a few people at the Theosophical Lodge in Pune. He said we should register immediately as there was limited accommodation. People would be coming from all over India to hear him. What an opportunity! About eight of my friends and I went to Pune. Most of us were young, with a few seniors. This was an important event in our lives. Some of those who went to the camp were Rao and Achyut Patwardhan, L.V. Bhave and Kusum, Miss Sarabhai, Pama Patwardhan, Sunanda, Dwarak, Lalita, Gautam, and Professor R.S. Bhagvat.

"Krishnaji held one group meeting almost every morning. The rest of the day we spent in reading and discussion. We attended talks and discussions. We had a good opportunity to see Krishnamurti daily in person and to hear him frequently. He had become well known as an international speaker and philosopher. We felt very much attracted to him and to his teaching. This camp lasted for ten days, a long and intense time. In a way it proved to be quite disturbing as well.

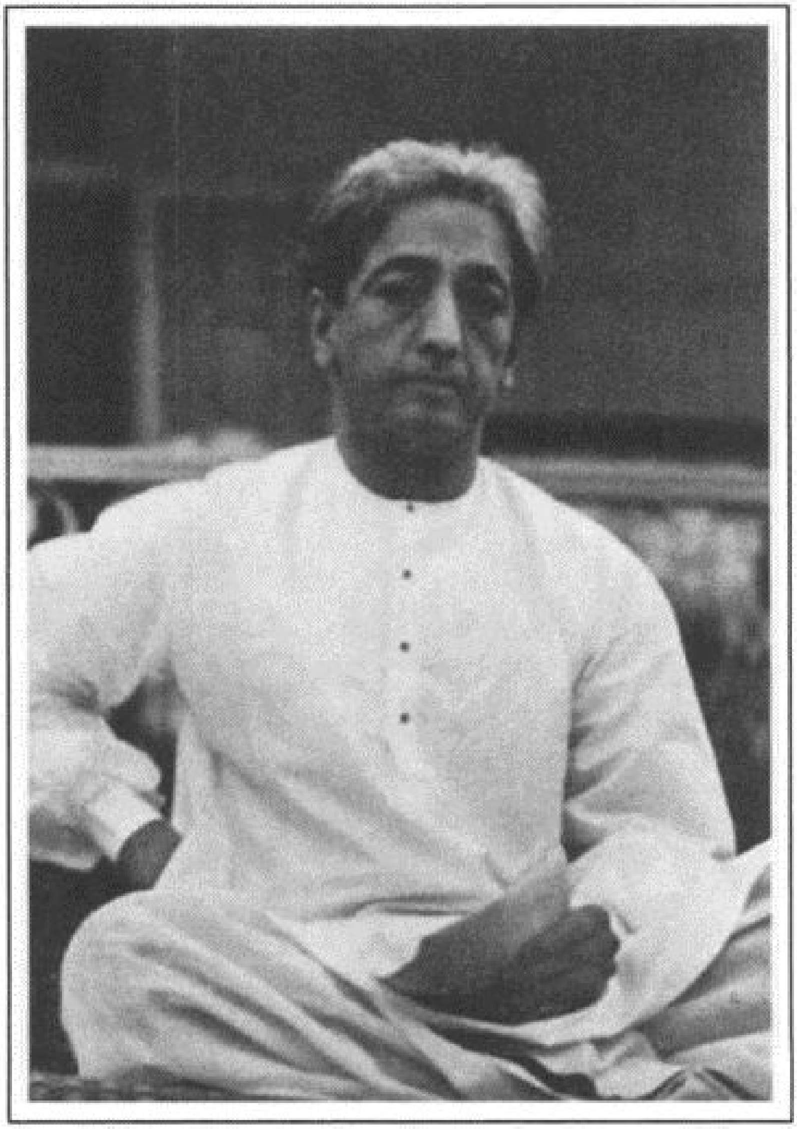
"We were young and wondering about our future, so his talks had a great influence over us. Naturally each one was thinking about his or her future and what course it would take. Since many of us were single, one important concern was the necessity or otherwise of marriage. This big topic affected almost everyone. Some of us decided to have a meeting with Krishnaji to discuss this issue specifically and to get some clear-cut guidelines from him. About eight of us bachelors made an appointment to see Krishnaji, and we went together to hear what he would say.

"Invariably, Krishnaji refrained from giving us a categorical answer, such as 'do this' or 'don't do it' – no clear direction or advice pointed the way. He left that issue up to us, saying, 'See how you feel about it, what you need to do.' And finally he said something like, 'If you feel good about marriage, go ahead and get married. Find your partner and just do it.' But he did not give us the clear-cut advice that we sought.

"That advice, or lack of it, disturbed me considerably. I had been observing that marriage was not really a helpful thing if you wanted to be free to engage in this inner exploration toward a transformation of life. At 27, busy arranging the marriages of my sisters, I frequently thought to myself that I had very little interest in this system of marriage and the bondage that it created. Krishnamurti had only said, 'Don't suppress yourself because with suppression you become hard, and suppression of the urge to marry will not help you.'

"Was I suppressing myself? Could I be thinking about this wrongly? Such thoughts disturbed me a great deal. I needed to know about myself, if I was actually on the right track or not. I decided to see Krishnamurti again, so I sought a personal interview. A few days later I saw him to clarify this issue for myself.

"I remember that day so clearly. We sat facing each other on a carpet and there was no one else in the room. I told him that I felt the necessity of this kind of inner experiment, that to me it was not just a religious act involving minor changes in behavior. I sensed that one needs to have enough time, freedom and energy to devote oneself fully to this kind of search. I told him how I felt strongly



J.Krishnamurti – a photo I took at a talk in Mumbai that freedom and aloneness are very necessary for this kind of radical discovery. And I asked, sincerely, whether I was suppressing myself and becoming obsessed with ideas of freedom and spiritual truth. In response, he quickly caught hold of my hand, pressed it strongly and said firmly, 'Oh no, don't worry, you are not suppressing yourself. You do see the bondage and limitation of marriage.' It brought such a great relief to feel that I was not on the wrong track!

"My friends eagerly asked what Krishnamurti had said to me privately. In talking about this amongst us, my other young friends did not agree that marriage would be a trap. On the contrary they felt excited about Krishnamurti's answer to the group - to go ahead if you felt strongly inclined. Actually, except for me, all the seven others in our group gradually ended up getting married. Only I refrained from marriage. I did not want to be tied down to family life and all that it would entail.

"This was an important meeting with Krishnamurti because it lifted a big burden from me. It is very difficult to find a partner who will live on the same wavelength and with identical aspirations, where neither partner would overshadow the other with personal attachments, likes and dislikes. And I did not want to gamble on this. I preferred to pay the price of being alone and single to keep my freedom, rather than risk the restraints and compulsions that inevitably come with marriage.

"For me the issue of leading the life of a householder and the idea of marriage slowly became very weak and finally ended. I had seen the psychological and emotional attachments inherent in it. I questioned how one could keep awareness, freedom and the pursuit of spiritual goals in the confinement of an intimate relationship. Conflict and friction between two minds are inevitable, with no easy way to avoid it. I could see that two people would always be creating problems and then trying to find solutions and ways to agree.

"By closely watching the outcome of the traditional lives of my various relatives and friends, I came to understand that such a pattern of living would not be good for the fulfillment of my emerging spiritual yearning. The inner quest was becoming more intriguing and increasingly more urgent. I saw the subtle attachments which hinder one's full freedom for fearless exploration. *It seemed* *clear that one could learn from one's own responses to life if one was free from all external influences and pressures. I realized that learning about oneself is possible only by being alone, quiet and free.*

"I had my own strong mind, my own likes and dislikes, my preferences and conclusions. Knowing this, how could I establish right rapport with someone else who also has an equally distinct individualism? Is it not necessary to establish right relationship with myself first? I knew my mind pretty well. Even with some goodness and friendliness, for a mind like mine it would be frankly impossible to relate with the other person on the same level, at the same time. I realized that without true openness and freedom within me, I would have no basis for right relationship with another.

"All of this inward pondering had its effect on me. I became skeptical about being a follower of any ideology or personality anymore. Eventually I lost interest and drifted apart from my friends. I realized that words and ideas, even the statements of someone great, were not the whole truth for me. All this constituted second-hand, intellectual knowledge. This fact became increasingly clear. I wanted to explore and experience it first-hand.

"At this time there was an appeal from the group around Krishnamurti to become involved in organizing his work. Mr. Achyut Patwardhan, a close associate of Krishnaji, invited me to stay at the Varanasi School and help him. Mr. Patwardhan knew I had been interested in agriculture, and he wanted to start an agricultural farm at their Varanasi center. That was a practical and tempting proposition for me. I had my own farm and fairly good knowledge about agricultural practices, so I thought a great deal about this invitation.

"After pondering a lot I finally realized that this kind of work, although good, would not be the right course for my inner change. Some of my friends did get involved in Varanasi Center projects, but I stayed away. I concluded that merely attending talks, reading books or being part of a group would not by itself bring about the kind of radical change that was necessary – the very transformation that Krishnamurti was pointing at. I recognized more and more clearly that at this stage of intense pondering and search for freedom, participating in any organized group activity, however good its goals, was not the right thing for me. I remained by myself, alone, withdrawn from my friends and social activities.

"Although I continued to visit other popular spiritual teachers of the time, they did not make much of an impression on me. They had their followings, and I realized that all the people around them were only followers. The majority of these seekers remained dependent on the teacher. For twenty, thirty or more years no real change had occurred in most of these people. And I felt that I didn't want to be like them – forever a follower.

"Finally even my interest in Krishnamurti's books and listening to him over and over again diminished. At last I came to see that the challenge hereafter was mine alone. Nobody would be able to help me, push me, or change me. I accepted the fact that my own pondering, my inner search, and my first-hand understanding would be the only way, the only path. This perception changed my perspective and priorities.

"Then the real question before me became: how should I conduct myself or adjust my life? I had responsibilities and commitments, so the major issue was: what next?

"My awareness and understanding of the external world became clearer. *Philosophies and books did not entice me any longer because I saw that seekers may generally read and follow other people's ideas, but they do not see any relevance to themselves, or what they themselves are doing. And they do not change; perhaps seekers just become more clever at quoting and reciting the ideas and words of teachers. So reading and listening also lost their attraction.*

"I began to feel a kind of aloneness, a coming back towards myself. In family relations and in my work at the office I felt strangely apart. Dissatisfied with my situation and uninterested in my work, I felt strongly that my life was definitely missing something essential.

"Still I had to handle various family responsibilities. I continued to fulfill my family duties as I should, yet I recognized a strange gap in my life. Some kind of unknown feeling was developing, keeping me aloof from everything happening around me. Although I was a landowner, head of a business, had money, friends and family, the inner feeling grew stronger and clearer that I felt myself to be outside of it all, like being a guest in my own house. I struggled to find out why I felt that way, but my uneasiness or discomfort just kept becoming more and more acute, with no answers.

"Sometimes that detachment from everything and everyone overwhelmed me, and I had to follow the urge to leave. I tried going away alone for three or four days in order to stay by myself quietly. I spent the time wondering about life, pondering over the whole situation, trying to search for answers. Intense probing went on inside me. No other situation could substitute or be better, nothing would have helped me come to any clearer understanding. Like the issue of marriage, it became evident to me that getting involved in any binding emotional relationship was not the way for me. By the time my younger brother Ram finally married, I began to get an inkling of what my direction would be.

"I had observed what my daily life consisted of – its burdensome and repetitive nature, its compulsive regimentation – but I saw no real alternative. I was keenly aware of the limitations of my routine existence. Every desire and commitment created its own expectation and bondage, and then it became very difficult to be free from those.

"For example, in the family business I perceived the limitation of ambition. Although I did achieve some social and business success, I saw the self-centered, repetitious nature of that life. Everyone was basically competing, repeating, copying, following, becoming smart and more clever. No creativity, no meaningfulness and certainly, no depth existed in any of this.

"At this point I saw the futility of struggling to find the way out of a dead-end existence. I began to understand that the driver in all of this activity, the mind itself, is nothing more than a repetitive mechanism. I was witnessing the effect of that mechanism on me as well as on the lives of people all around me.

"When the time for my own marriage finally came, I realized that I could probably accept wedlock and become a husband and parent very easily. But I also saw how such a step created a tight enclosure. I would be closing myself within a family and a house, a job, drawing circles around myself. One can have a bigger or smaller circle, but the bondage is still there. Absolutely no precedence of celibacy existed in my family. In fact everyone considered it crazy and abnormal to think even a little bit negatively about marriage.

"That period of about ten years while I took care of my family and business responsibilities was a time of growing interest and deepening perception about various aspects of life. I learned from the examples of others who had maturity and so-called success. Luckily their lives gave me the opportunity to learn. In the material achievements of very successful people I invariably saw hidden sorrows, dissatisfactions, angers, jealousies and constant fears. They never in their hearts felt real fulfillment, no true peace or deep contentment. Their material success became only a stepping-stone to further wanting.

"My questioning had begun after seeing more and more the limitations of the traditional and accepted patterns of life. I saw how we come up with our own petty likes and dislikes. We build on ambitions and desires, which then bring their own longings as well as catches. Everyone gets wrapped up in goals and their fulfillment. The very pursuit of an ambition creates an exclusion and limitedness, and the field of perception and existence becomes narrow. As our vision becomes narrow, we become blind to the broader aspect of life, the deeper reality of it.

"At this point, I saw how everyone in society is thirsty and hungry, carrying their begging-bowls with self-centered activity, endlessly, throughout their lifetime. And how strange that no one can satisfy another or find any real satisfaction for oneself. The way of living that I saw around me didn't attract me any longer. In fact, I was bewildered by the chaotic, complex and illusory nature of life.

"As the usual mundane living lost its luster, I became aware of a wider horizon of life. To reach for it presented a great challenge, a spiritual adventure. Others had written and spoken of an entirely different energy unknown to the average person. Although I never had strong dreams or aspirations of spiritual experiences similar to what I had read about, the possibility of a new energy or different plane of existence seemed very important.

"I had a deep and persistent longing for something other than what the life I knew had to offer. The glamour of worldly living ended, and I became somehow ready to take this adventurous step. No one was there to guide me or to assure me of success. This yearning to search for it became more and more urgent. A feeling of acute necessity began to develop, the need to explore the unknown, to find the other dimension of life.

"It did not remain just a desire but developed into a necessity. I had seen how our ambitions, goals and activities are usually self-centered and shallow. Even spiritual seeking consisted mostly of superficial routines and intellectual discussions. For this matter of radical search, one has to reach the point of urgency. Real vision needs to have depth, and even the questioning and inquiry must have seriousness and honesty. Otherwise the mind keeps one at a shallow level and actions remain lukewarm.

"Since childhood, although I could be jolly, on the whole my family considered me to be a person of serious disposition, with a solemn view of life. So during this period from age eighteen to thirty, I gradually saw more and more clearly, the endless nature of pursuits and entertainments of ordinary living. This pondering was serious and honest. The tempo of inquiry became highly accelerated – inquiry of every type such as reading, visiting sages, discussions with friends. My circle of inquiry and observation became wider, covering more aspects of everything that was around me. But ultimately I saw the limitations inherent in this kind of purely intellectual inquiry and following.

"An innate longing to find the unknown dimension of life created a strong yearning in me. Also I sensed that if I seriously wanted to make a break for this kind of search, now should be the time. I was young and healthy. I knew that to take the challenge of bringing about this radical change in my own life would not be an easy task. It needed a lot of energy, good health, honesty, and dedicated work. It seemed logical that one must do these things while young, while the body, brain and nervous system are healthy and alert. I pondered this deeply. The intensity of yearning and the sense of urgency to do this at the right time were crucial factors. I realized that I could not just go on thinking about this until old age caught up with me.

"The cumulative effect of all-round understanding along with attention, objectivity and sincerity, pushed my decision. This attention made me recognize certain facts: the loss of life's usual charm and hold, the bondage of marriage and possessions, the illusive pursuit of ambition, the futility of following, and finally the necessity at this time in my life to get free from them all. I saw these facts clearly, and this prompted radical action.

"Life itself led me through all these different perceptions, pointing to me the need to make a break, to create a space for this spiritual search. Generally mind and thought have their own dominating designs and ambitions for us, allowing no openness or room for clear sight. And we, with our habits and arrogance of thinking, refuse to look at life openly and honestly to learn from it. *One has to be totally open and faithful to Life. Then Life through its intuitive prompting teaches and guides us. Life itself is the teacher. There is no other guru.*

"This is not the usual kind of learning and understanding, as from reading books and collecting information. I had studied, listened to the spiritual teachers, and seen their endless followers. But sometimes Life gives you a fresh chance to learn. A time comes when there is suddenly a new openness. The mind itself has to be open to receive, to know, to see. It, too, has subtle moods. *The mind can be arrogant and closed, or it can benefit by being open and receptive, free from analysis, logical conclusions and strong notions. Just as when a mother listens openly to her child, sensitivity is generated.*

"The mind is full of energy, but because of the strong conditioning of past experience, the mind becomes opinionated and narrow, and thus does not allow space for the new. The mind is arrogant and assertive about the knowledge it has accumulated, and thus loses its openness.

"But by then I had lost that sharp edge of certainty. *I had seen the inadequacy of so-called understanding obtained through information and accumulated knowledge, society's traditions and religion. It became obvious that although we may discard the traditions of society, we then develop new patterns of our own. We create individual traditions from our own experiences, and those degenerate into rigid opinions and habits of thinking and acting.*

"To be free is to be empty of all tradition. We discard the old but then again get trapped in our own conditioning. One has to see the futility and bondage of both – our own, newly created patterns as well as the age-old traditions. When we see this, there is no base, no created foundation to rely on. Past experience is not our guide. Suddenly we feel rootless – almost non-entities.

The mold of personality breaks and loses its hold.

"All of these observations tugged me in some unknown direction. I grasped the futility of the images of family, philosophies, pursuit and following. All the usual images lost their attraction, glamour and hold. My mind gradually lost its capacity to create hopeful dreams, and it no longer remained a strong domineering force. But even with this, I did not know what direction to take.

"*I realized that this exploration cannot be a partial or half-hearted activity. It had to be a total approach. This radical change would need the whole energy of life.* If the challenge is of total transformation of mind, then the approach needs to be total and profound. Such total change cannot be partial, using a limited energy. It demands all of our energy. *I saw how life energy is divided and scattered everywhere in constant thoughts and relentless actions. I realized that this fragmented energy cannot make any profound change. Only the action of one's entire energy can bring about such a radical transformation.*

"So I began to ponder: is it possible to gather the total energy?

"Then the question became: can this mind itself act rightly to bring about fundamental change? I realized that the mind, however honest and sincere it may be, cannot on its own act as the intelligent force, to take us to that ultimate reality. So although the challenge became obvious, the action to meet the challenge remained unclear.

"For some time I wandered in a psychological wilderness. My seeming clarity of all these years, gathered through knowledge and logic, began to dim. Living became like existing in twilight, neither in darkness nor in the light.

"Thus the marriage of my brother Ram inadvertently became the turning point of my life. My attachment to the family had diminished significantly. At last my main responsibilities to my siblings were over, and my brother could ably handle the business and look after my mother. Painfully, I finally realized the futility of my day-to-day existence.

"The necessity of finding a new way empowered me to leave my wealth, security and prestige in order to totally embrace this challenge and to embark on a new quest. That urgency itself took charge of me. Life pushed me to a voyage of discovery, out into the unknown.

"So this is how I came to Mount Sajjangad in search of a quiet place, away from all the usual influences. By living alone in complete quietude I started with my inquiry and awareness, my inner pilgrimage in this little hut. I lived here in front of all of you with dedication, inwardness and austerity. I feel grateful that my search for the Divine has been fulfilled."

Thus I concluded my long narrative. The sannyasis had listened to me intently, silently, perhaps reflecting back on their own youth, struggles and searching.

In parting I said simply, "I want to express my thanks to each of you. By your goodwill and with the blessing of this quiet, beautiful and sacred place, I was able to experience the touch of the Divine".

As I stood up to leave, one of the seekers volunteered to help me carry my luggage down the mountain to the bus station. I accepted his gesture as a token of their goodwill and love. Thus I left Sajjangad with feelings of fulfillment, humility and reverence.

While walking down the path I reflected over the time when I had climbed that same trail seven months before. With confused mind and heavy heart I had trudged up that steep path, alone and lonely, after the upheaval of leaving everything of my former life behind. I carried then a mind heavy with habits and attachments. I was filled with sorrow and fear, steeped in doubt and despair, infected with turmoil and tension.

Vividly I sensed the difference between then and now. Now I carried in me my new discovery! Like an eagle I swooped down the mountain with eager impatience to inform my mother, dear ones and friends that I had been born again, that I had found my peaceful world within.

EIGHT

HOMECOMING:
FROM SOLITUDE TO SOCIETY

Sharing the Inner Mystery

On arriving in Mumbai, I headed straight for Thane. Mixed emotions filled me on this first return home: wonderment that I had been gone only seven short but intense months, gladness that my adventure had resulted in fulfillment and peace, and enthusiasm about seeing my mother, family members and friends again. I felt ready for this big step of going back to visit after a prolonged and secretive absence.

Upon seeing me, my mother first responded with intense relief and then great happiness at having me back. At first sight I ran to reach her, just like a child running eagerly towards his mom. We locked in an embrace. Mother caught me tight for a long time, almost indicating to me that she would not let me go away again! Although happy and excited, she sobbed intensely with the memory of the anxiety and tension she suffered, as well as thankfulness and relief at my return. She held my face lovingly in her soft warm hands to look at me closely. Her eyes were full of love and excitement yet flowing with the tears of her loving attachment. Some of my sisters and my younger brother also gathered around, all with tears of joy and relief. At this unexpected reunion we celebrated our excitement and happiness to be together again.

Naturally, my mother thought I had come back to stay. She began planning and bustling around to make me comfortable in every way. The hard part came when I explained to her that it was only a visit. On my saying this, she immediately responded with resistance and grief. I tried to comfort her by talking about my happiness in what I was doing and that I was well. She reluctantly admitted that I appeared to be relaxed and in good health.

Mostly, I wanted to share with her my experiences in the hut, and I spent much quiet time with her explaining what had happened to me up there. She could only partially understand this. Her main concern remained about my well-being, how and where would I live. If I stayed alone and away from the family, how would I support myself? I tried, with difficulty, to express my feeling of not needing a house or the security of family, and that I trusted that Life would lead me. I told her that the right form of living was the most important, and that my livelihood would come in its own way.

My mother only wanted me to live in the family house, that was all. I could do whatever I wanted to do, but I should remain there. I gently explained to her that there was nothing like a family home for me anymore. I would never again be a householder, a family person. To me it meant a limitation on life, so I preferred to be free and independent.

When she saw my firmness, she gave me another alternative: if I did not want to live in the main house, all right, but she would have a separate place built for me by the side of the family house where I could stay independently. "Just don't go back to the jungle again," she pleaded with me again and again.

Trying to convince her, I explained, " Now I am on a different road in life, one that requires freedom, non-attachment and independence."

She remained determined to keep me with herself. I told her, "Look, you believe in God. Your God has given you two sons. Why? You should not be so selfish, wanting to keep both of them for you. It is better for you to keep one for yourself and give the other back to Him. Don't you think God will be happy with this offering from you?"

To this statement she looked at me with pride, and giving me a gentle, loving slap on my face, said, "Don't try to be clever with your Mother!"

Her concern and love for me were sincere, and I understood her feelings, but I could not accept her suggestions. My brother and sisters also tried to convince me, yet somehow I was not ready to do this. To be honest to my own needs of living without the bondage and expectations of family, I gently yet firmly said "no."

After a few days of living with them I went to stay with friends in Mumbai.

They anxiously listened to me describe where I had been and what had happened to me. Some were former Theosophical friends, and others close associates interested in Krishnamurti's teachings, besides a few social contacts. Again I tried to share my experiences, the inward search, the awareness and how it had led to insights and freedom from thought. I spoke to them about the inner explosion, the new-dimensional energy and the resultant silence. They listened with amazement and interest but without comprehending the full significance of it. They were just glad to see me and asked lots of questions.

Meeting Krishnaji Anew

My friend Mr. Bhave, informed me that Krishnaji would be speaking in Chennai in a few days. I felt very strongly that I should see him and inform him about what had happened in the mountain hut. So I decided to go to Chennai from Mumbai, about 20 hours by train. I bought some fresh fruit, selecting the choicest apples to offer to Krishnaji, and caught the earliest train to Chennai.

As a member of the Theosophical Society, I was able to get a room in Bhojanshala, a place for visitors to stay, at Adyar. Krishnaji was staying in Vasantvihar, a ten-minute walk from there. The very next day I rushed to Vasantvihar to make an appointment. His assistant, Madhavachari, gave me an appointment for the next morning. I was very eager to meet Krishnaji and anxious to find out what he would say about my experience.

The next morning I woke up early, bathed and dressed in clean white clothes, and took with me some of the beautiful apples that I had brought from Mumbai. Madhavachari received me in the drawing room, and I gave the basket to him. He suggested that I wait there for a few minutes, and then Krishnaji would be free to see me. Bubbling with excitement and eagerness, I wondered if Krishnaji would recognize me now, in my new, changed appearance.

The much-awaited moment came when Krishnaji himself opened the door. He looked at me, and his first sentence was, "Oh, you are in your new beard." And without hesitating I replied, "Krishnaji, it is not only the beard that is new, but there is something new behind the beard."

For a moment he was taken by surprise, and he looked at me so piercingly, as if looking through me with X-ray eyes. Then he took me by the hand

and we went inside. He gestured and we sat together on the floor. He said simply, "Tell me about it." And then he took my hand, holding it tightly. Krishnamurti regarded me intently, lovingly, and again said, "Tell me all about it."

So I gave the whole report, of how I had abruptly left my house in Thane, how I had felt the urgency of quitting my business and family activities to go to a quiet place where I could be by myself. Then I narrated the whole story of my stay in the hut on Mount Sajjangad and the explosion I experienced there on that mysterious day.

He listened with rapt attention, and commented simply, "I am very glad that you went through all this." We sat quietly, and then after a pause he suggested simply, "*Let that energy act on its own. Do not push it or pull it in any direction*."

With this he suddenly changed the subject, inquiring after my health. What he had meant by that comment about the energy acting on its own didn't make total sense to me at the time. But later I understood more and more what his words meant.

Generally the mind forms ideas about how this new energy works. We read books and gather information about what spiritual energy is, what it does, and how it moves. So memory has this collected information, and then we optimistically begin to imagine accordingly, wanting to have that energy work according to our mind's own wishful ideas. The mind begins to imagine about the new energy, giving it different names according to ancient religious and traditional books.

Krishnaji meant that I should allow that energy of the inner domain to have free movement in its own way. To do that one must be aware of the energy and also of the mind's every movement regarding it. But especially one must not try to push or pull the energy in any direction. That was his only suggestion. I did come to realize this first-hand as I experienced more and more of the energy whenever it appeared. His suggestion was very appropriate.

Krishnaji went on to other subjects, asking me what I had eaten there in my hut. I told him that I ate only rice for all those months, nothing else. He grabbed my hand again and said "Oh no, you must eat the right food now. Eat wheat and more protein, more greens, and don't starve yourself anymore."

I smiled and said, "Krishnaji, it is not necessary for me to eat only rice anymore. In my hut I was so intent on doing this inner exploration that I did not want to distract my attention collecting various things and to spend time cooking. I wanted all my time to be used for internal pondering. So I accepted the situation of austere living and simplified eating. But now, hereafter, I need not starve myself or eat stringently." I assured him that I would eat better, knowing that there was no need for such austerity any more.

He made some inquiries about the hut, where it was, how long I stayed there, some other casual questions, but especially made the point that eating a variety of things is necessary. Then suddenly, he asked me, "Did you see your mother?" I assured him, that I recently did go to see my mother, and she was happy about me now.

The meeting lasted about 30 minutes. My time was up, as other people were waiting to see him, so I arose and said "Krishnaji, thank you. Thank you so very much." Without thinking about it, I opened my arms to embrace him. And he, in an uncommon practice for Krishnaji, also moved to hug me. It was a genuinely deep and intimate embrace, especially close and meaningful. To see the joy on his face was so very uplifting. That gave me profound satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment. It was one of the most intense moments of happiness in my life.

After meeting with Krishnaji in Chennai, I returned to Mumbai for another ten to fifteen days. To go out to a solitary place and to stay alone again became an increasingly strong urge. I felt like a misfit with my family. Somehow, with the way they lived–their attitudes, emotionality and attachments, that busyness in their lives, being all the time occupied, working under some compulsion or other–I saw clearly how they hardly had any freedom, peace or relaxation in their lives. That kind of living did not attract me any more. It was hard for me to participate in the daily routines of family life, to be in the midst of such hectic activity for a prolonged time. Thus their suggestion for me to live near them did not appeal to me.

So I started to think more and more of a plan to go away, find another quiet mountain like Sajjangad, and live on my own again. I wanted to find a similar mountain, cool and solitary, where I could build my nest to be in the company of nature. That inner urge kept pushing me to go away after only a few days of visiting. Also it was summertime, and the heat and humidity in Mumbai grew intense, so I wanted to go to a cooler place. I thought about Panchagani, a hill station where I had vacationed a long time back.

My mother helped with the preparations, giving me a good blanket, a carpet, a small kerosene stove and a few other essentials, so I carried more equipment this time. Although she had found me to be healthy, happy and contented with my life, my mother was not happy with my going away again.

She acknowledged that I had changed somehow, that I was not the same young man who had left seven months before. Her traditional mind perhaps could not completely comprehend the significance of what I said about a profound change. But she saw that her son was in all respects completely fine, independent and at peace. Assuring my mother that this time I would not have to go into severe solitary situations anymore, I said, "If you feel like seeing me, just send me a message. I will come to visit you at any time." This reassured her considerably. Thus she was comforted and not unduly worried as I took my leave.

NINE

LIVING IN A CAVE: INNER JOURNEY INTENSIFIES

Submission and Cellular Change

From Mumbai I went to Panchagani, about 120 kilometers from Pune, and continued on until I reached Bhilar, a small village three miles farther into the mountains. There my friend, Dr. Sawant, had a little farmhouse some distance outside the village. I stayed with him for a couple of days, but I wanted to find a place where I could live alone, not with anyone. First, he insisted that I should stay in his house, and then he offered to make arrangements for me to live with his friend who had a big house in the nearby village. I didn't really want to be in anyone's house, with any family. But finally I agreed that it would be alright for a short time, and meanwhile we could find some place for me to be alone outside of the village.

One day, while walking around in the area I heard some villagers mention a deep cave in the dense forest, up in the hills. I immediately went to see it and strongly felt that this cave would be a good place for me. It had many thorny little bushes and rocks inside, and was about 20 by 30 feet a–spacious area. My friend Ganpat Sawant and some other young boys helped clean it up, and the cave actually became quite roomy.

I readily accepted this simple dwelling. In fact I felt almost as if the cave were inviting me to be there. The interior of the cave had a good feeling to it. Some distance away, an ancient temple lay in stately ruins. The small stream nearby carried lovely, fresh water from the mountain. Because of all this, I liked the place, even though it was rocky and remote. The cave was about two miles away from the village over quite rough terrain with no actual path leading up to it. No one would ordinarily walk or go that way, and so it seemed to be a very quiet and unknown area.

The village people were concerned and anxious when they heard about my plan of staying in the cave, deep in the forest. They felt that the cave would not be a safe place for a lone person to live in. But somehow I convinced my friends that I would be safe there by myself. Dr. Sawant understood me and believed in why I wanted to be there alone. He gave me a bag of wheat berries, which I used to sprout and eat sometimes, and at other times I had rice. The villagers suggested to me that I should frequently make a fire inside so that the insects, small animals and reptiles would not try to enter the cave. So I built a small fireplace inside to burn dead wood and dry leaves. I could easily maintain the fire, which also became my kitchen. I cooked my meals of rice and dal together on three stones and a fire made from dead wood from the forest. It gave me some warmth too, especially at night in the chilly mountain air. And the smoke did indeed drive the bugs out. That became my regular ritual–to light the fire and sit by it both day and night, always by the side of the fire. Little Ganpat collected lots of dry wood and kept a pile ready for me at the mouth of the cave, so handy and useful.

The cave in the Bhilar forest near Panchagani wherein I stayed

Each day I would go to the stream, just 400 meters from the cave, take my bath and get some drinking water. Often the villagers brought me vegetables from their farms, along with wheat, rice and other grains. I cooked my meal mixing everything together. Occasionally the village people brought milk also. My meals were better now, not just rice as in my mountain hut at Sajjangad.

Slowly, I started getting acquainted with some of the villagers of Bhilar. At this time I felt a little more open to meet people. They came occasionally to sit and talk with me. These sincere yet simple people did not understand my purpose in being there. They would just say that this was my 'tapasya'–my penance.

Sometimes they pressed me to know what I was doing, because they saw that I did not read books or chant or do any of the regular religious practices. I would tell them in simple words which they could relate to, that this was a search into myself, to find God who exists deep within each one of us. I said I wanted to see how the mind, with its ambitions and constant chattering, keeps us busy with our outward activities. Thus we are prevented from meeting God who dwells quietly inside each of us.

There is something like a cave within us also, I suggested, and in that inner cave resides the truly divine person. Our true self is not the ego-mind that we are more familiar with. I said that one needs to stay alone at times, to be free from this constant action-reaction of society. Otherwise, that continual encounter becomes the only form of life. No time remains for inner exploration. I explained how I wanted to spend all my time and energy for this kind of inner spiritual search. These villagers, like most people, took for granted that their daily thoughts and actions were all that living entailed.

Because Panchagani was a somewhat famous hill station, many Indian tourists visited there, and a number of foreigners also came occasionally. In those days we had some hippies, too, visiting the hill stations in search of the so-called spiritual people of India. One day, such a hippie showed up at my cave. He was a seeker traveling around to different places. Somehow he had heard about a person in a cave, and he just appeared there to meet me. He brought with him a stove, backpack, hammock and all that kind of camping gear.

He was very friendly and became interested in how I lived and what I did. He asked me how I happened to be staying alone in this cave. I talked about my experiences somewhat awkwardly, since it was difficult for me to express it all in English. We often ate together. He used to go to the village early in the morning to buy country bread and other simple food to add to my various combinations. He stayed there with me for maybe two weeks, asking many questions about my experience of this solitary life of inward aloneness.

After satisfying his inquiring mind, he decided to move on. But as a parting gift he gave me his hammock, which he had slept in since he arrived. From then on I used the hammock every night. It had not been very safe to sleep on the ground as I had been doing. Sleeping while hanging and rocking in the hammock was a new experience for me.

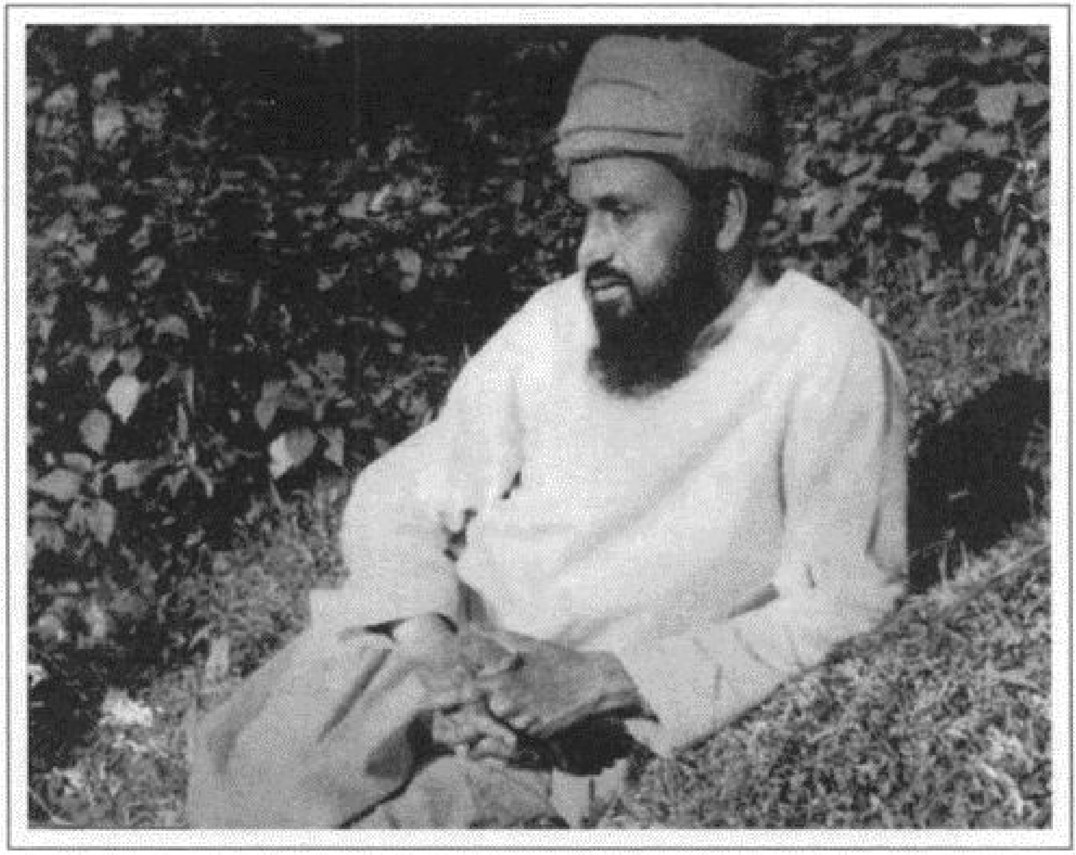
After that mysterious inner explosion which took place in the hut of Mount Sajjangad, a unique energy current had started working in me. But its presence was not felt so keenly when I went to Mumbai and then to Chennai. In fact, till I returned to the cave it did not show its face clearly. Here in the cave where I had no particular sadhana, no real routine or practice of anything, I felt a refreshing kind of freedom, with no psychological compulsion or burden of any religious discipline.

So now, that new energy flow came back, appearing again even more strongly. I started sitting quietly for some time, then the sitting period grew longer and longer. That became my way of living in the cave. Slowly the sitting and being with myself grew more and more intense. My meditation took the form of that quiet inwardness. It all happened very casually, not because I purposefully decided to do a particular practice.

This internal energy had its own momentum and plan, coming and asserting itself, moving up and down and doing whatever it wanted. Then it would just disappear. I accepted this energy, allowing it to move and work in its own way. Its play became my meditation.

My mind as a thought activity diminished greatly. It was needed only for the activity of cooking and looking after my bodily needs, and not for any other purpose. The energy, moving and working in its own way, presented a mystical drama within me. Sometimes it felt blissful and pleasing, and at other times almost strenuous and painful.

When I needed a rest from all this, I went out for walks. Above my cave extended a flat-top mountain or tableland. I would climb up and walk around this huge area overlooking the valleys. It was a very beautiful sight with the expanse of land below. The whole area had a variety of fruit trees like mangoes, jambul, and other forest berries. Because of this abundance, many birds and animals, like monkeys, rabbits, porcupines and wild boars came around. I used to see snakes on my walks, and sometimes the footprints of leopards, hyenas and jackals, which I recognized from my hunting days.



Outside my cave: resting on the grass in a pensive mood

Even with all this abundant wildlife nearby, I saw that I had no feeling of fear or sign of worry in my mind. The villagers kept coming to warn me about the animals, telling me to take care, that there were ferocious animals and not to venture out of the cave after dark. They insisted that I keep the fire burning during the night to scare away the animals, insects and reptiles. I did see animals on my walks, but they never tried to enter the cave or bother me. As far as I knew, no animal or reptile ever entered the cave since I moved in. A couple of times I saw a panther around the mountain rim, loitering about in his search for food.

One evening I sat at the opening of my cave, looking around casually at the approaching evening. Twilight time had turned the sky a dusky gray-blue, as the light was dimming. I looked back on top of the hillside above the cave, and there I saw the silhouette of a panther above me, maybe 60-70 feet away. His shadowy figure glided along the crest, and then he sat down on a large rock, up above the mouth of the cave. His outline was clearly the stately silhouette of a wild beast. I remained sitting quietly, simply watching him for a few minutes. Then I turned back and resumed looking at the glowing pink sunset in front of me.

When the sun finally went down and darkness set in, I turned around to look at the spot where the panther had been sitting. To my wonder he was still there, exactly where he had been a few minutes earlier! Then it became more and more dark, and I could no longer see him from where I sat. To see him was exciting and energizing, a truly enjoyable sight of a wild animal high on the rock. Then, as usual, I returned into my cave, ate my rice and vegetables, sat for some time, and climbed into my hammock to retire for the night.

I must have stayed in the cave for about two months. Summer began to come to a close at the end of May, and the monsoon winds started blowing. As the monsoon period neared, the villagers advised me that the cave would not be a safe place to live in any longer. During the monsoon all the reptiles and mountain animals generally go to caves for shelter. They suggested that I stay in the village school, and told me that they would build a small room of bamboo for me, but not to stay in that cave. When I hesitated to agree, they pleaded with me, saying it was certain that all the local creatures would go there for shelter from the fierce mountain winds and rain. They pointed out also that water always entered the cave, trickling inside from the cracks in the hillside. They earnestly invited me to go to the village, warning me strongly about my safety.

To be there during the monsoon rains was not a good idea. Still I declined their offer, since I was not interested in living where there would be a lot of people, children and noise. Dr. Sawant, a political activist, social reformer, and a very popular person in that area, visited me in the cave quite a few times. He suggested that if I wanted to stay alone somewhere, then he knew some friends in the town of Mahableshwar who had bungalows which lay vacant during the monsoon.

Mahableshwar was another famous tourist spot on the same mountain range eight miles away. It remained closed during the monsoons due to heavy rainfall. There would be no tourists or holidaying city people during the rainy season. Dr. Sawant offered to take me to meet his friend Mr. Hirjibhai Rajda, thinking he could perhaps find a place for me.

The beautiful hill station of Mahableshwar receives heavy rain, an average of 250 inches during the four months of monsoon. It is famous for its cool climate in the summer, and many rich people from Mumbai and Pune, in fact from all over the state, go there to spend their summer. There are big bungalows and hotels in Mahableshwar to accommodate these seasonal people.

With my supportive friend Mr.Rajda

Dr. Sawant's friend, Mr. Rajda, rented a big old bungalow in which he had a large apiary and honey center. The operations of the honey center are closed during the monsoon, so I could stay there for four to five months. He showed me the place, which consisted of three rooms and one big hall with a bathing area and toilet facility. Mr. Rajda, a very humble and loving person, was very willing for me to use this bungalow during the monsoon season.

I accepted his offer on the condition that nobody would visit me there, that they would leave me alone. But the doctor remained concerned for my safety, as I proposed to live alone for four months in the thick forest. No one would be anywhere nearby during the heavy rainfall. The place was indeed very solitary, damp and cold, but I liked the surrounding thick forest area; therefore I accepted it. Dr. Sawant and Mr. Rajda insisted they would check on me occasionally from their residences in Panchagani. I finally agreed to their loving and practical suggestion, and the problem of my housing during the monsoon was resolved.

There I lived during the four months of drenching monsoon. The doctor visited me periodically, bringing me wheat, rice, potatoes and garlic. I ate lots of garlic and ginger root to keep myself warm and protected from the cold. The room had no heat at all until later Hirjibhai Rajda gave me some wood charcoal that I could burn occasionally to keep warm. He brought me a good quality blanket and some more clothes to wear during the cold and wet monsoon months. I put out pots to catch rainwater from the roof for my cooking and drinking, since the only well was too far to go during the constant downpours. Mr. Rajda gave me a jar of honey and a bag of wheat berries, so I changed my diet completely from rice to sprouted wheat. Rice had been an easy dish to cook, but contained mostly starch. Wheat was grown in the region and thus easy to get. I sprouted the wheat, which makes it more nutritious, and when cooked it is just like a vegetable. This became my staple diet. Cooked sprouted wheat with honey and locally grown peanuts remained my diet for many years, being easy to prepare, inexpensive and nutritious. That was all the food I needed.

Soon I got lost in my inner world of silence. The outer difficulties of heavy rain, severe cold and dampness became unimportant. My inner work started slowly, smoothly, and I felt happy with it. The more important work was that spark of twinkling energy appearing and working in different parts of my body, differing in intensity, moving with its own unpredictable plan.

Sometimes that energy led me to take some unusual postures. It seemed as if they would make it easier for the energy to smoothly move around internally in my body. I would almost involuntarily assume unique postures and stay in them for a while, feeling and experiencing the energy at work. Often these postures were very difficult, and I had a hard time holding them for any length of time. Holding onto the unusual physical 'asana'/posture for the time required by the energy left me utterly exhausted. But I let the energy spark do whatever it would with my body.

Then, after a while, suddenly the energy would just diminish, lose its intensity, and my body returned to its normal position and physical state. The play of this energy was sometimes very strenuous yet, at other times easy and pleasant. I had no way of anticipating what form it would assume or for how long it would continue. This game of energy went on unpredictably, but I felt a joy knowing that something mysterious was taking place right there within me!

The monsoon came with its torrential rains and cold, but I survived in my simple room. As the monsoon neared its end, I realized that the beekeeping operation would soon resume. Therefore I decided to move out from that place to find another one.

In the meantime, the proprietor of the apiary, Mr. Rajda, had become more intrigued by me. He was curious about my activities and also very sympathetic. When I talked to him about leaving, he asked me what my plans were and if I would like to stay there. Mr. Rajda himself suggested that I should stay on, that he could make some arrangement for me to stay in one of the rooms of his building at the honey center. I knew it to be a business place where a lot of activity and noise would soon start up again, and I did not want to stay in that kind of busy place. I explained to him that it would not be conducive to what I was going through.

When he saw my reluctance to stay in the honey center, he very hesitantly showed me a small, one-room place about 200 feet away from the main buildings. An old shack where the gardener stayed years ago, it had been lying vacant for many years. The cottage was made of stones and mud and consisted of one room, maybe ten by fifteen feet, with a small open veranda outside. No one had been staying there for quite some time, so it had fallen into disrepair. He told me that he would be happy to have it cleaned and repaired if it would be convenient for me. He would also get it ready for the heavy monsoon by packing it tightly all around with bundles of hay to provide protection from the damp mist as well as from leeches and other insects.

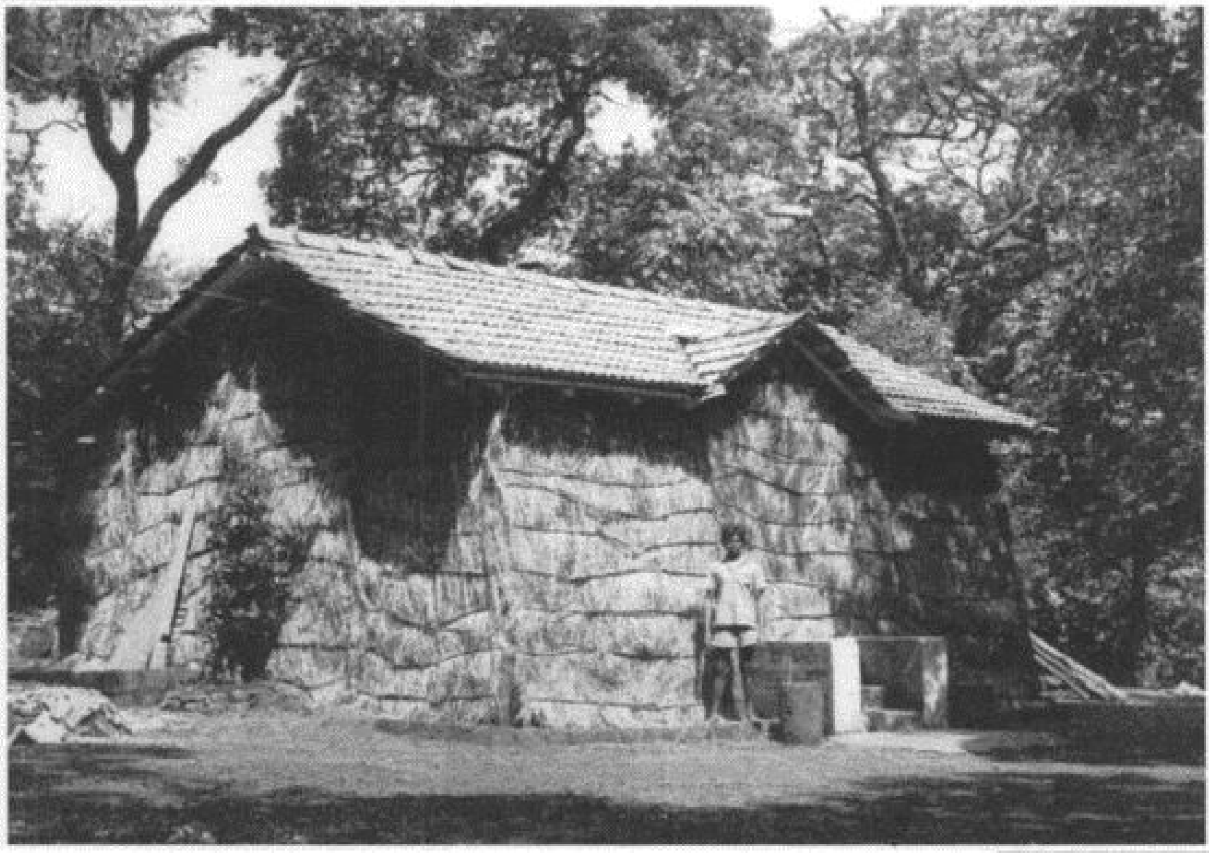
Somehow I liked that area of the forest, with its tall trees, deep colorful greenery all around and dark red soil. A small well about 40 feet away provided excellent water. Although the house was dilapidated, I immediately accepted his offer, thanked him, and said that I would like to live there. It had no electricity and no facility of any kind, except for that wonderfully fresh drinking water well. I accepted it, and after the monsoon was over, I prepared to move in immediately.

The very first day I arrived at my new dwelling in the early afternoon. I crossed the porch, entered the room, and, lo and behold–there, in one corner, very comfortably sat a large cobra! I made a few movements, thinking the cobra would leave on its own. But the long snake did not move. He must have been living there for quite some time. Evidently this was his home and I the intruder! I put my bag on the porch, sat down, and just waited. But the snake would not move out. So I decided to spend my first day and night outside on the porch. As evening came I ate my sprouted wheat and honey. Soon after the night crept in, I spread on the ground a few gunny bags which Mr. Rajda had given me. The open veranda became my sleeping room.

I slept well, without any fear of the snake nearby. In the morning I got up refreshed and checked to see if the snake still remained inside. It was nowhere to be found. He must have left the room quietly while I slept on the veranda.

Immediately, I cleaned the cottage room and moved in with my small bag and blanket. I cleared the branches and leaves from the yard, since it had been untended for a long time. This work I did with great joy and enthusiasm as I had this solitary place all to myself. So began my stay in yet another cottage.

I felt quite excited about the wonderful well close by. For the first time I would have ample water all for myself, to bathe and wash my clothes as well as for cooking. I took some interest in planting herbs like ginger and garlic and also a few vegetables, since the water was abundantly available. For months I never ate fresh vegetables, and now I had a sunny spot to cultivate some greens. I looked forward enthusiastically to having the time to be more physically active and working around the cottage.



Mahableshwar cottage all packed and ready for the monsoon

Staying in Mahableshwar for the four months of heavy monsoon had been a challenging period of total solitude and an important time for my internal unfoldment. After a couple of days of cleaning the room and yard thoroughly, I slowly settled down again to my solemn, silent life. I began sitting for a longer time by myself, often two to three hours at a stretch, absorbed within my own energy field. The new energy flow once again started working even more intensely, sometimes both by day and night. During this period I never had a set discipline or regular routine of any sort.

That internal energy acted with an intelligence of its own, but it did not seem logical at all. My mind had no influence over it and could not dictate its activities in any way. I would take note of its presence with wonder, without any anticipation.

This wonderful phenomenon was something entirely new taking shape in my inner space. It was silken smooth, enchanting, comforting and blissful. I did not desire for it to come. I could only remain open and inwards without expectation of any sort. Then alone it would appear and make movements according to its own initiative.

Sometimes my mind would plan out the day, prompting me to finish up my activities and clean up, telling me that I should sit and be prepared to have it come during my quietude. But then absolutely nothing would happen! I would sit in readiness, eagerly waiting for this internal spark to appear, anticipating its wonderfulness. But it never came then. This new energy never obliged my mind when it longed for that experience. I realized that the mind's wishing and planning has no influence whatsoever on this mysterious energy phenomenon. On the contrary, I found that any mental expectation, any sort of wishful intention served as a hindrance to it.

At times poetry flowed spontaneously from within. I must have composed 30 or 40 different poems during those months. The poetry came in Marathi, my mother tongue. I was astonished by the way the poems would appear, the lines worked out, all unplanned. I had never written poetry before. Somehow, some of these poems were lost over the years.

My main work consisted of submitting to the energy when it appeared. It came and operated like a small glowing point working inside. It would remain stationary for a while in some part of my body and then slowly move to another area. It chose its own time and area in the body on which to work. My duty was to attend to it–feel it, experience it with my whole being, without creating a thought about it. Only in the state of thoughtlessness could I welcome this energy. At times its play was very powerful, charging my whole body with a new vitality. At times I felt almost afloat with magnetic charge.

This kind of intense vibrancy left me with a supercharged sensitivity within, affecting my whole body and brain. This was not at all like being energetic in the usual physical or mental sense. It felt like a shower of high voltage, causing an internal effervescence of something entirely new.

During this time it became clear that my brain did not have the capacity to respond to that high-voltage dimension. The brain and nervous system needed to undergo a change in order to become the right apparatus to handle this energy.

The mind and brain have evolved over time in conjunction with thought, as instruments for thought/emotion activity and their expression. The evolution of this apparatus of mind was only to facilitate thought and memory.

But now, for the spiritual dimension, thought becomes obsolete, remaining useful in very minor ways for daily activities. The nervous system is not refined enough to receive the higher-dimensional energy. It has to undergo some fundamental changes, which the energy itself brings about little by little, with its own intuitive influence. It has its own ways to affect and train the body to enable it to handle this new energy current. I felt and saw this as it was happening in me. Several times it worked on the very back of my eyes!

The mind cannot do anything on its own to make the neurophysical/biological apparatus the right vehicle. Its efforts are not only futile but are hindrances to this process. The mind may chant, meditate, dance or even have us stand on our head for hours. All these efforts are not enough to crack its own hard shell.

Only this new-dimensional energy is able to effect a change at the cellular level. The influence of this compassionate energy stimulates the body's cells and vitalizes the brain and neurons in its own way. Thus the dormant parts of the brain and its cellular structure are regenerated and made capable of responding to this high-voltage energy.

I lived happily and contentedly in my Mahableshwar cottage–totally independent, physically fit and buoyant, confident, relaxed, vibrantly awake in my internal space. Living itself was a joy, and the feeling of relatedness extended to everything around.

In this place, one mile above sea level, dawn arrives a bit earlier. Birds begin their orchestral singing, whistling and chirping with the break of dawn to fill the whole surrounding with musical gaiety. The variety of birds, each with its own song, creates a living symphony. This melody announces the existence of their own kingdom. The sunlight, morning mist, and music mingle together to create a harmony, which is the creative expression of Nature. Man must only have the sensitivity and enough silence in him to listen and join this lively occasion of Nature's celebration.

That year the monsoon season lasted for an extended period, raining until the middle of October. Now in the beginning of November the sky shone a clear blue, and the sun came out more strongly. After spending a full four months cooped up in my little room, I felt so free and delighted to walk out in the open under a clear sky. All through the monsoon, the whole of Mahableshwar had been covered by a huge cap of damp clouds that soaked you to the skin. Following the rainy period, the weather remained cold as it was the beginning of winter.

One particular day the sun looked bright, even through heavy mist. Feeling the emerging warmth of the sun, I decided to wash my clothes. I went to the well, washed my clothes by hand, and brought them near the house, laying them to dry in sunny spots. As I spread my wet blanket on a nearby bush, I heard an unusual humming sound. It was very low to begin with, almost musical, and I listened with interest as I finished spreading the blanket to dry. Very rapidly the pitch of the hum grew, and I began to look around to find the source of the strange sound. As my eyes scanned the area, I saw a few bees flying above me at great speed. In a few seconds, many more bees gathered, hovering about 30 feet above me. The buzzing sound became louder and louder and the pitch much higher. Suddenly there seemed to be thousands of bees frantically circling around, droning vociferously overhead.

It was a terrifying sight to see this huge cloud of bees spinning around in the sky at tremendous speed right above my head. Some started descending, threatening almost to engulf me. Seeing the bees coming down and encircling me, I got nervous, not knowing what to do in such an unusual situation. Without wasting any time I threw down the remaining wet clothes, covered my head and face with my hands, and ran into my cottage. From behind the half-open door I watched this sudden invasion of my territory by thousands of honeybees.

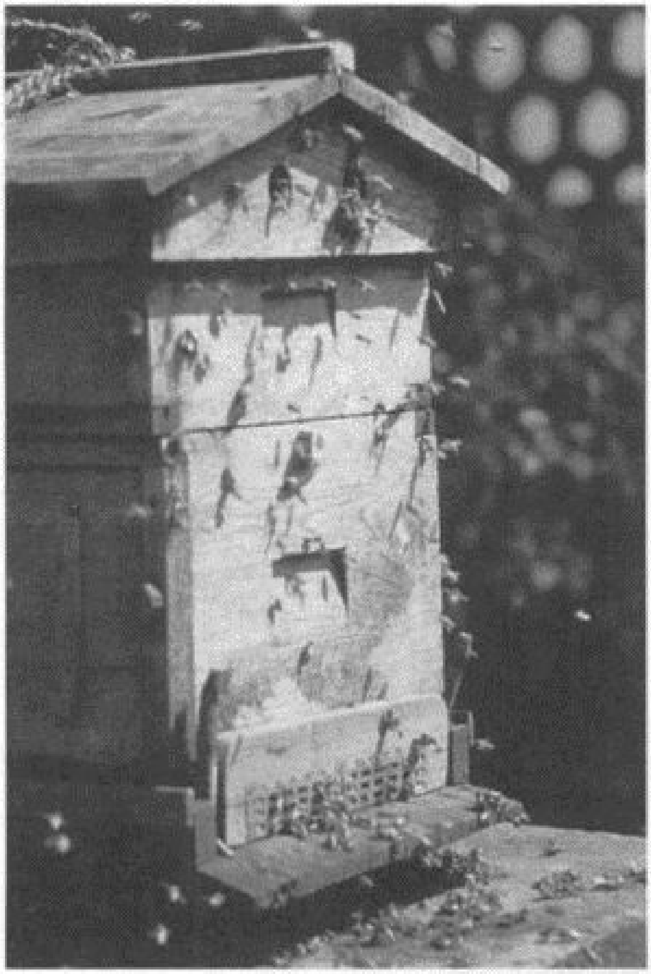
They were hovering and circling and crisscrossing at high speed, for no apparent reason or purpose. I could not guess what they were up to. This high-speed drama went on for quite a few minutes. Then suddenly the bees came down, settling at a height of about five feet on the Jambul tree under which I usually sat on a flat rock.

They all gathered slowly on one branch, forming a huge hanging, tapered cluster. As I looked timidly out at the movements of these invaders, I saw Mr. Rajda running toward my place, along with two other workers from the honey center. He called out to me and asked if I was safe and unhurt. He said calmly that I could come out now without worry. Since he was the expert, I had to believe him, so I edged my way out, opening the door a bit cautiously. All three men wore hats covered with netting and gloves for protection. They carried among them a large wooden box, which turned out to be a beehive.

They went straight to the buzzing cluster. Two men opened the top of the box and from underneath gently shoved the box upwards to gather most of the clustered bees. Then they quickly put back the top, closed the box, and placed it down on my sitting platform. Mr. Rajda invited me to come closer to watch this interesting operation. In a few minutes all the remaining flying bees started going into the box, and suddenly everything became strangely quiet.

Mr. Rajda then explained to me that this drama is what they call 'swarm'. These bees had left their parent colony with a new queen bee in search of a house for their new colony. The bees chose my place to settle down in, and Mr. Rajda provided the swarm with a new house, this wooden beehive. Now they were quiet and comfortably settled. He said, "This bee colony has come here to live, so this new family belongs to you."

Seeing all that had happened in the short space of twenty minutes, I was dumbfounded with wonder. Not quite believing what I had seen and received, I said, "Uncle, you said this is now my beehive?" He said, "Yes, of course it is yours." He further explained that there is a convention amongst beekeepers that whenever a swarm leaves its old house and chooses a new place to settle down,



This bee box housed the swarm that descended on me and became the foundation of my small apiary

This queen bee (seen in the center of the honeycomb), made possible the collection of 22 lbs of honey from a single bee colony in the very first year

it is choosing its master. This amazing and unpredictable drama had just made me the owner of a beehive!

This blessing of Nature had descended from the heavens above to land and settle in my yard. As the days passed, I found what a new and exciting experiment I now had. It gave me a fresh tool to understand nature and an opportunity to establish a closer relationship with it. The bees helped me so much nutritionally, as well as financially. In the very first year this single hive gave me 22 pounds of honey! This hive became the foundation of my apiary. With this one seed hive and the help of Mr. Rajda, I was able to build a small apiary of ten beehives in only two years.

From then on I took a keen interest in the habits of bees, how they work, their organization and family life. With Mr. Rajda's assistance I learned all that I needed to become a knowledgeable beekeeper. The surrounding area was very rich in flowers carrying pollen and nectar. The Mahableshwar forest was in fact famous for producing good-quality honey. Soon I began to collect a large amount of honey. I found that the area had many big as well as small beekeepers, and the local bee cooperative collected and sold the honey produced by the beekeepers. It was easy to send honey to the cooperative and receive back the profits. It worked out very well, and thus my maintenance problem was easily solved.

For many years I had been eating only wheat, which I sprouted and cooked like a vegetable. Then I started to grow potatoes and yams around my cottage for additional food. I had only a few negligible expenses. Now with the production of honey, I could actually save some money and purchase lentils, cooking oil and a few other essentials. I had to spend only half an hour a day on an average looking after the bees, and half an hour working in my kitchen garden. So spending one hour of my time daily was all that I needed to earn the necessities of living. The rest of my time was free for myself, for sitting quietly with alert attentive inwardness. What a blessing of Nature! Life–Nature–thus gave me Its helping hand.

Later that night, after the swarm arrived, I sat by myself and with a sense of deep wonder and reverence felt very vividly how I had been blessed by this rare event. Even after living in this bee-keeping area for quite some time I had never thought that I might become a beekeeper. That night, I visualized how these bees would provide for me in their own way, helping me to maintain myself with minimal expense of time, and leaving me free to explore the inner realm, which was my passion.

Life itself had given me the means, and now I had to honor its will. I sensed very keenly how the silent hand of causeless creation works to support and uphold its kingdom. Shedding all my material possessions and giving up my sheltered life at home, I had taken the leap into the unknown by going to Sajjangad. I was touched to see that for the one step that I took in that direction, the unknown had reciprocated and obliged by taking several more steps towards me.

The whole drama of the bees was the play of Nature, an expression of the unseen universal intelligence. To feel the benevolent existence of this creative energy around and within, and to flow with it, is to realize Life itself. It is a small wonder, then, that life upholds itself to find its own fulfillment. Nature never fails those who turn to it with a genuine urge to find its pulse.

TEN

THE UNPREDICTABLE PLAY OF LIFE ENERGY

Pilgrimage to Celestial Cave

For seven years I lived in the cottage, tending my bees and kitchen-garden and passionately attending to my inner work. Seven torrential monsoons came and went, as did the tourists and honey center workers. I felt grateful for my quiet place and simple life.

Meanwhile, Mr. Rajda had sold his honey center business and no longer rented the big house and grounds. Since he was the one who had originally given me permission to live there, eventually I began wondering if I should vacate the cottage and return it to the actual owner who lived in Hyderabad. A lawyer and Member of Parliament, Dhundiraj Naik had given me permission to live there through Mr. Rajda, but it never had been clear for how long I could stay.

In India, if someone occupies a house for more than three years, he becomes the legal occupant of the place. The owner cannot easily evict him unless there is an agreement to that effect. I knew some of the rules of tenancy, having myself been a landlord. When I left home we owned four buildings with eighteen tenants, so I had dealt with these legalities before. Mr. Naik was such a good person that he would not ask me to leave even if he wanted the cottage back. I had come to Mahableshwar for solitude and uninterrupted search within, and now that work was basically finished. The question arose whether I should give up this place rather than take undue advantage of his goodness.

So, in 1962, after seven years in Mahableshwar, I became somewhat restless about overstaying my welcome. One day, I packed my essential belongings in a handbag and gave away the extra things from the kitchen, distributing them to the people in the area. All my belongings fit into one handbag and a shoulder bag. I had decided to visit the owner, barrister Dhundiraj Naik, and give the cottage back to him. I packed some jars of honey from my beehives to give to Barrister Naik. All of my ten bee hives I left with the young man Barku who had helped me so much during my seven years of solitude, particularly in the monsoon season when he brought dry wood for me.

After informing Mr. Naik that I wanted to see him, I took my things and traveled to Hyderabad. This was the first time that I was going to his home. Upon arriving, I saw that he lived in a palatial house. Being a lawyer, social worker and an elected member of Parliament, he was well connected to the kingly state and he lived quite lavishly. He welcomed me warmly, as did his sister who lived with him. I stayed as his guest for two days at their insistence.

Finally, when he could spend some time at home, I went to talk to him about my wish to give the cottage back to him. I started off by thanking him and saying, "This cottage has been a good place for my sadhana, my spiritual work, but I shouldn't get attached to one place. I have packed my few belongings and come here with the keys to give them back to you in a spirit of true thankfulness."

I handed him the keys, which he took reluctantly. Looking perplexed, he asked me, "Where do you plan to go from here?" I replied, "I don't know. I will find a new place."

"Why do you want to leave the cottage?" he questioned. Responding frankly, I answered, "I do not want to take undue advantage of your generosity and kindness. You would not tell me to leave the place, even though you might want the cottage back."

He smiled and said, "If it is comfortable for you, and if you like being in Mahableshwar, then we want you to continue living there. We are very happy that a person like you is staying in our cottage." I tried to convince him about my plan to leave, insisting that it was not good for me to remain so long at one place. But finally he said in a commanding tone, "If your father tells you to take this key back and live there as usual, what would you do?"

Suddenly this brought tears to my eyes. I saw him as a father figure, and the tears welled up at seeing this quality in him. Bending down to touch his feet, I said, "I see my own father in you, and I appreciate your greatness. Now there is nothing more I can say." That was a very emotional moment for me.

Then he continued, "Keep those keys in your pocket. On the contrary, if there is any inconvenience for you, if you need any changes or repairs, please let me know immediately."

This touched me very deeply. I took back the keys, thanking him and his sister for expressing this fatherly feeling toward me. I had never met him, yet his kindness was obvious. I left his house wondering about this change in the whole situation and in my plan to go somewhere else. What did this mean? I had given away almost everything I owned since I was going to leave the house. Nonetheless, I returned to my forest cottage with a great feeling of reverence and burden of gratitude.

There I continued to live for twelve more years, until 1974–solitary, independent, self-sufficient. All this time the inner work went on, but on a deeper level. This new energy would appear and do whatever it had to do within me. On my part there was only observing, allowing and supporting its movements, not hindering it in any way. As I came to understand, the energy spark would appear and move around in some specific internal area, bombard it with its vibrant presence, stimulate and enliven the area, quickly shift to another part, or just disappear abruptly. This work made the cells of the body and nervous system sharp, alert and sensitive. A change of this kind takes quite some time, the period depending upon the degree of crudity and insensitivity present within the body and mind.

While these mysterious movements of Life energy went on, I was never unconscious of its play. There was always an awareness of its movements. My mind did not 'know' in the usual way of having an idea about it. Rather, I had a feeling of the activity and an understanding of it, but without a thought about it entering the mind. The agency of thought did not get involved at all. I felt no movement of thinking, imagining or producing ideas. Instead there was the experiencing and simultaneously an awareness of that experiencing without an idea of it. In the usual way, either the mind knows or it doesn't know. It acts or it doesn't act. But all of this is on the same level of thought/mind. The other way of knowing is without the mind, without thought, just direct and intimate experiencing, which is a totally different way of understanding.

On this level, sensitivity and understanding go hand in hand. *Sensitivity is a state of heightened alertness and receptivity to 'what is', to the reality of the moment, free from opinion and bias, hopes and fears. There is a complete negation of thought and mind in this state which is poised to capture the whisper of the unknown. It brings about non-verbal, impersonal understanding which has nothing to do with thought or mind.*

Thus began my experiencing of an intuitive flow and understanding, which occurs instantly without the need of thought/mind. It brings a new spontaneity to living. This is how the mind energy transforms into spirit. The crystallized mind slowly changes into the momentum of sensitivity.

The crude thought/mind transforms into thought-less-ness. The usual way of knowing through thought changes into spontaneous understanding of the fact of the moment. Thus, knowing begins to happen without the agency of conditioned thought.

This is how the verbal/thought activity subtly changes into spirit – the timeless.

Such a transition into spontaneity is the ultimate flowering of thought/emotion mind. Herein lies the freedom from mind as well as the freedom from time which is the memory-mind. That is how the timeless begins to operate.

Herein is the new opportunity available for man to rise above himself. There at that height he remains free from time, free from the mind to celebrate the ecstasy of timeless existence. The bound-up life energy attains its freedom, remaining clean and transparent to invite the touch of the timeless. This supreme blessing of the timeless, of the causeless compassion, is awaiting humanity on this earth!

Each day consisted of submitting to this new energy, if it came, and letting it do what it intended. I became aware that in fact it was Life energy that was on a pilgrimage, not me. It is the intrinsic passion of Life energy to free itself and find its fulfillment through intuitive wisdom.

I was careful about keeping my food, exercise and rest in good order so that I could function optimally with this new energy flow. For the twelve years that I stayed in the Mahableshwar forest, I rarely left the area. Although I saved some money from the bee-keeping operation, I had no interest in going anywhere. I lived contentedly in my little cottage – alone, simply, looking after my bees, growing a kitchen garden, and attending to my inner work. My life was full, peaceful and contented, because I was in touch with something unknown, mystical and fulfilling.

Of the many people who came to see me, one was a prince from the former 'princely states' of India, small areas once ruled by 'maharajas' or kings. The Independence movement abolished these kingdoms. This ex-prince, named Raja of Bhor, showed considerable interest in spiritual matters. He had his summer resort bungalow in Mahableshwar and visited me frequently to discuss spiritual matters. After knowing me for a while, he invited me to go with him on a pilgrimage to the famous Cave Shrine of Amarnath in Kashmir.

Many people go to Amarnath Cave with faith and religious sentiment, but I was not really interested in that kind of pilgrimage. However, I wanted to see the Himalayas and experience that spectacular area, so I accepted his invitation.

This is the most difficult of all the pilgrimages in India. The terrain is very hard to navigate, even with horses. The path winds up to 13,000 feet, and sometimes people have respiratory problems due to the lack of oxygen at that altitude. The mountain road is actually dangerous, as much of the trail is full of snow. People in India are not used to walking on snow, and the path is very narrow and slippery. The trail goes from Srinagar to Pahalgam and then requires walking to the cave for three days on foot. Nonetheless, I had heard about the great natural beauty of the lofty Himalayan Mountains. Raja Sahib had both a good camera and a telephoto lens, so this was a great inducement for me to try my hand at photography in that incredible setting.

In addition to the opportunity for outstanding Himalayan photography, two mysteries surrounding the pilgrimage to Amarnath intrigued me. One was a natural phenomenon involving an ice formation in the image of Lord Shiva. At that altitude where everything is ice and snow, in one special spot in the corner of a huge cave the symbolic image of the god Shiva is formed out of ice year after year. The ice naturally forms the same exact image, which dramatically resembles the traditional god Shiva, whose image has passed down throughout history. The ice formation stays for a few days or weeks, and then dissolves as naturally as it is made. This happens only once in a year! All devout people visit this spot to pay homage to the place where this mysterious ice image appears. It has special religious significance for devout Hindus.

The other mystery is about a pair of pigeons. History chronicles a pair of pigeons that circles the area around the cave. No one knows from where they come or where they go. The whole region is very barren and mostly snowbound, with no place for pigeons to live in. But they appear. The mystery is not only that they appear and disappear, but that only a few people are able to see them. It is said that only pure and wise people can see the pair of pigeons. That is how the story goes.

As we arrived at the cave, somehow, very clearly, I was able to see the two pigeons circling gracefully. Excitedly, I exclaimed over the two snow-white pigeons zooming swiftly above the cave. It surprised me, and I asked the others if they, too, could see the pair. Everyone looked around, but no one could see them. Not a single other bird appeared in the whole area, as it was a snowy region and quite inhospitable. Considering that the mystery of the pigeons has gone on for hundreds of years, it is especially intriguing since no bird can live that long.

Reaching the cave was a difficult trek, negotiating the very steep, slippery and dangerous path. We traveled in a group with guides. We took our own food, and carried tea in a thermos flask, for keeping ourselves warm. Actually, for me, it was a bit luxurious, because we had the prince with us and all his porters to carry the food, a tent, and dry wood. Still it represented quite an accomplishment in those days to get there safely. Not all are so lucky, because sometimes big storms and heavy downpours cause devotees to abandon the pilgrimage. At times people get lost or die en route. This pilgrimage occurs generally in August when the weather is unpredictable. Some elderly and weak people even die on this trek due to the cold as well as from the difficulty of the entire trip. One is really left to the mercy of the elements. There can be storms and heavy rains on the way, and only the Kashmiri guides and their horses know the region and way through the mountains.

The day we reached the cave it was full moon, which is considered the best time to see the formation of the ice image. We finally entered the cave and found out that one can stay only for a short time inside. People have to keep going through steadily because it is a one-way path, very cold, and no one can linger along the way.

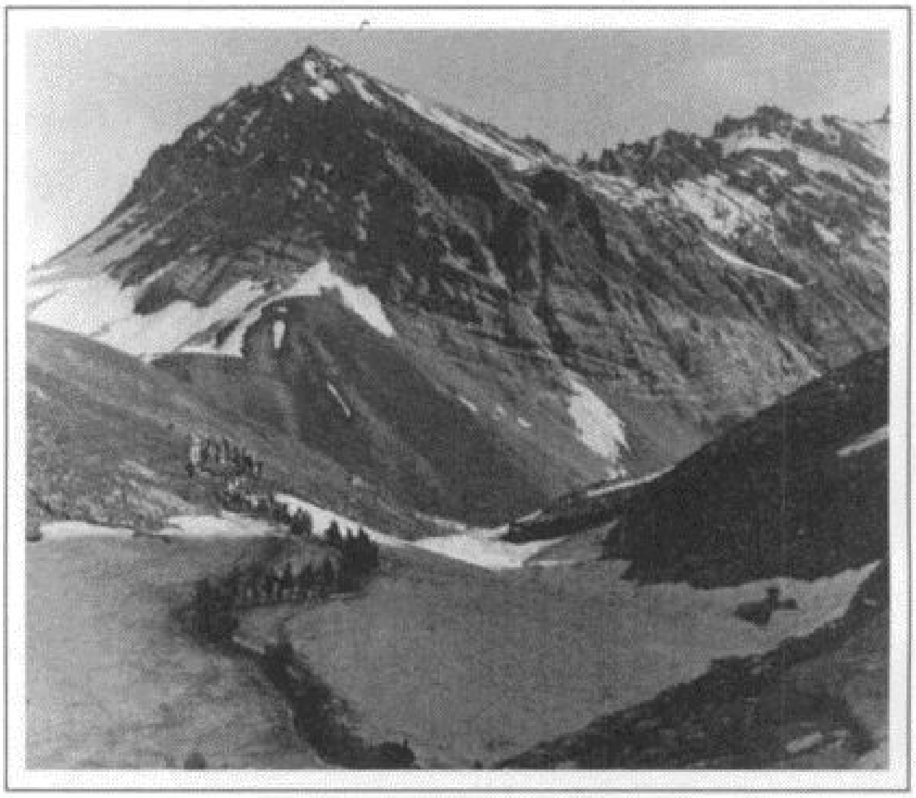
One is given only a few minutes to be in the cave to offer garlands and say prayers at the seat of Lord Shiva. The atmosphere is very solemn despite the many people constantly passing through. The whole area of the cave has a kind of magnetism because everyone carries a strong spirit of devotion. One can feel the high level of sensitivity in the cave, which intensifies the feeling of religiousness.

Everyone leaves the cave with the strong feeling of accomplishment. Initially they go with enthusiasm, some expectation and a spirit of devotion. They face and overcome the challenging trail and weather. Then one experiences the magnetism and intense feeling inside the cave, seeing the natural formation of ice, which to some is the image of a god. It is a difficult journey, a struggle, really, to reach that spot, facing all the problems of climate, food and austerity. But then there is a deep satisfaction on the homeward journey. One goes back happy and contented because a strong desire has been fulfilled. The return journey is undoubtedly easier also, but the main thing is that one returns with a sense of contentment and peace at having fulfilled the goal.

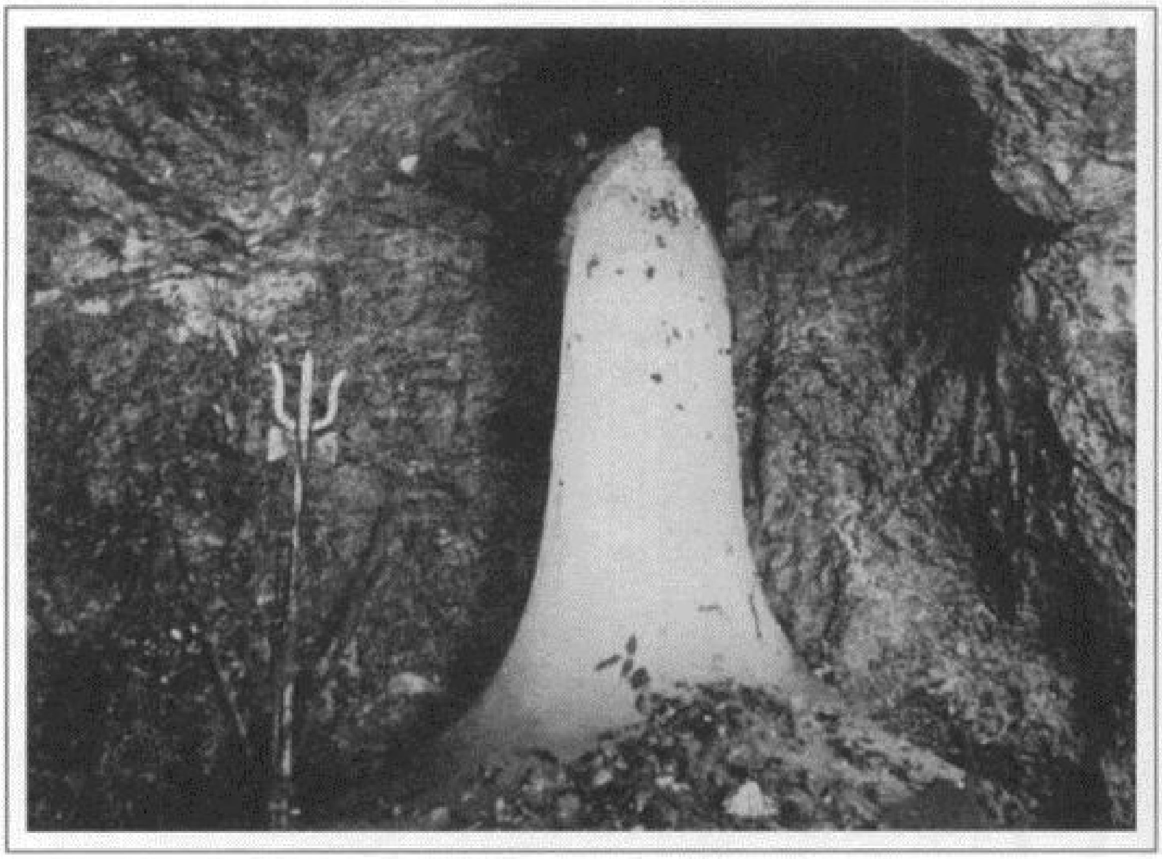
With this feeling, we all too, walked back down the mountain. Yet I knew also that this kind of pilgrimage can be just one way of maintaining the traditions of getting into the external aspects which we call religion. Hindus go to their shrines, and Muslims to Mecca and Christians to Rome or Jerusalem. Each religion holds on to its own places and traditions, regarding them alone as sacred and legitimate.

What is the real meaning of religion? What is true spirituality? And what is the significance of an ice image? Of pigeons?

I was pondering over the significance of a cave high up in the



Pilgrimage to Amarnath Cave



The mysterious ice image of Lord Shiva in the cave mountains. I felt that a cave is a symbol of the cavity or empty space within a person. It is in fact one's own inner space. A cave is an outer symbol of that inner space, the inner emptiness. Everyone carries it, but we have filled it with the sundry things collected by the mind, which is always desiring more. Can we clear that cave, empty it totally so that it will be available for the arrival of the pristine and divine?

Only an empty cave – that highly sensitive inner – can invite the Divine. The Divine will gravitate only towards clean, transparent emptiness. Then, just as Nature's law makes the water flow to the lower level, the energy of the higher dimension, the Divine and sublime, will flow down to give its touch to the mundane. When the ground is cleaned and the green meadow ready, the celestial bird will surely arrive uninvited.

I returned to Mahableshwar with thankfulness and an expanded awareness of what encompasses devotion and religious pursuit. I was glad to have seen the cave, its ice image, the pair of pigeons, and to experience its whole significance. The wonders provided by Nature are indeed mysterious, much greater than man, more powerful than we could imagine.

Truth is experienced in an empty heart and by a naked mind in total denudation of personality, wherever one may be – on the mountaintop or in the valley. Being in the company of nature surely assists one to charge and vitalize one's sensitivity to rise above the thinking mind. Only a sensitive unit of clean energy, unpolluted and transparent, helps one to invite the touch of higher-voltage benevolence, which is the Spirit within.

The virgin forest around me at Mahableshwar and my humble cottage in it were great assets in this endeavor and inquiry. Feeling Nature and realizing its humble beauty is to become one with it. Then Nature accepts one as a part of it and supports its own creation.

The daybreak and morning glory on my mountain brought the birds out of their nesting places, inviting them to fly and sing in enchanting tunes. The bees, busy collecting the pollen and nectar from freshly opened flowers, buzzed as if singing in praise of Nature for producing abundant sweet nectar droplets in flowers. Near my water-well, frogs lived comfortably, croaking at times to announce their presence. The monkeys, following their leader, jumped from branch to branch with precision and courage. Mother monkeys, with their young ones clinging tightly, leaped confidently and with ease. The squirrels asserted their presence by chattering loudly. Their running around the trees chasing one another was a visible sign of their excitement and joyous playfulness.

There, with my bees, in my simple life, I had ample opportunity to be aware of Nature in its intimate form – the way it touches man with its infinite compassion. Even my little bees in their golden splendor rivaled the majesty of the tallest mountain! It is wonderful to see and feel how Nature in its unique way celebrates its joyfulness.

One only has to have the sensitivity to perceive and the silence within to listen to the orchestra playing in the lively forest. Then the forest is not just a cluster of trees, but a living paradise reverberating with the creative expression of Life energy. When the self-centered chattering mind becomes humble, tranquil and receptive, sensitive, alert and attentive, man can discover his kinship with Nature to become part of the undivided whole.

During all those years in Mahableshwar, I went to visit my mother only a few times. Once she came to see me, renting a bungalow in the nearby town of Panchagani. My mother, brother and sister-in-law stayed in that area for almost two years, hoping I would go with them there or even return to Mumbai with them. But I lived in my cottage and went to see them periodically. I remained completely on my own, independent from the family and from other traditional ties.

Twelve monsoon seasons of intense cold and heavy rain passed, and I was absolutely by myself for those months when everyone left Mahableshwar. During the good seasons my brother visited me occasionally to get some news of me. But I still honored my need to remain there, happily immersed in my internal work.

Some village people used to come to see me and talk, but I gave them short replies. They were mostly traditional people, not interested in the deeper understanding that I was exploring. To all who inquired about my way of living, I would say something simple, because almost all of them remained firmly rooted in their traditional viewpoints. I found it very difficult to talk about my experiences or that new energy, even in my own language.

Foreign tourists came around occasionally, having learned about me in the village or from someone. They were mostly wanderers on their way to spiritual centers, but sometimes came those with a truly inquiring mind, really interested in meditation or philosophy. With them I had to speak in English and would try to express myself a little, saying that life has different dimensions of which we are completely unaware. I said that what we know about and currently perceive is the very superficial level of the thought/mind. I talked to them about the experience of a new energy, something that is totally unique and far from superficial.

Slowly I began to find ways to express myself using English, to talk about the explosion, the new energy and intuitive intelligence. I found it difficult to communicate my experience in words, especially in a foreign language. My knowledge of English was very minimal since my education only went up through high school level. The medium of instruction was the local Marathi language, with English as only one subject out of many. I did not go to college, and so my knowledge of this language was rather poor. I had to find the words to talk about it, but many experiences were almost beyond words even in my native tongue. To describe the inner activities and work of the energy in my body was very difficult. Moreover, I found that it cannot be completely expressed using words.

During this time I sat for longer periods in meditation, more than two or three hours at a time. It was simply the play of this internal energy, using no techniques, no plan, no concentration, no chanting. I just let the energy come in, and then it did what it had to do.

Quite a few times while I sat in that state, a cobra came and sat by my side. When I got up from my meditation, I saw the snake who then slowly left. On a couple of occasions, I saw two cobras sitting there with me as I came out from my meditation. They left quietly when I made any movement. It is said that some of these reptiles are quite evolved among their own species, and that they are sensitive and receptive to energy vibrations that occur during periods of meditation.

It is a fact that there are some creatures that are more evolved, and the cobra is one of them. In Indian mythology, snakes are frequently shown in the presence of gods and goddesses. Other animals are also thought to be highly evolved, such as the deer, tiger, cow and elephant. But it was a surprise to me to find those snakes enchanted by the meditative vibrations. They were my guests during long periods of meditation. They did not leave quickly, but just calmly and slowly. A number of reptiles lived near my cottage, and I never disturbed any of them. Many birds also lived there, singing their lovely songs. In the night other creatures would come around, from scorpions to tigers. It was not a protected place, but I never felt scared of any of these creatures. They were simply living naturally in their own kingdom, and I joined them.

One evening I was on my front porch, just sitting quietly in a meditative mood, looking at everything calmly. The light was getting dim. Suddenly a tiger appeared from behind the thick bushes only about twenty feet away! Right in front of me loomed a ferocious jungle tiger. He looked at me, and I looked at him. For a few seconds we observed each other calmly, directly, without any fear in either of us. His face was so lively, bright yellow and clean, really very beautiful.

My mind had no fear, no thought whatsoever; there was only total perception, as if the entire energy of my life, without any fragmentation, was fully attentive to the fact in front of me. Then after a few seconds of our looking at each other, the tiger turned his face. At the same moment my mind thought the word "tiger". The very word itself brought a change in the encounter. He slowly turned and walked away. In only one jump he could have been on me, but he never showed any spirit of aggression.

This experience showed me that if there is no strong idea in the mind that a tiger is a dangerous animal, and if your mind energy is calm and clean, then it can be like an open book without fear or hostility. As long as we met each other totally, without an idea of the other, no fear or reaction arose. But when thought and memory brought the idea of fear in the mind, then that idea itself creates a different situation. This was a powerful experience!

A short time after my encounter with the tiger, my friend Mr. Rajda came around to visit. He was amazed to hear me describe that strange and unusually tranquil meeting with the wild beast. Tigers were considered to be extremely dangerous in that area, especially to dogs and other domestic animals. But sometimes, human beings are also at risk.

In times past when I was a hunter, eagerly awaiting the chance to kill a tiger just like this one, I would have seen him and immediately taken aim. Now my sights and insights were much changed from those of the young Dattaram Gavand from Thane.

Space is quiet
Nature is silent,
Communion happens
When words are absent.

ELEVEN

A BENEVOLENT CONSPIRACY

Life Opens the Doors

Mahableshwar is a famous hill station in the Eastern part of India, so naturally even in those days it attracted many visitors from throughout the country as well as from abroad. Occasionally, foreign visitors heard about me either in the hotels or the market place. So I used to receive some tourists and a variety of curiosity seekers at my small house.

One day two Americans came to see me, and we casually talked about Indian culture in particular and religion in general. At that time my English was still not really good enough to express clearly the mystery of my inward journey over the years, or the understanding which resulted from it. We discussed various aspects of rituals and meditation, what they meant in day-to-day life and a person's quest for inner realization.

While I was talking to them, an Indian gentleman unknown to me showed up. He sat there listening intently to our conversation for about an hour and a half. After the Americans left, he introduced himself as Mr. Shah, a jeweler from Kolkata. He asked me if he could come back the next day, and seemed a little eager to meet me again. I agreed, so he arrived early the next morning. Mr. Shah was a traditional Hindu, a sincere person seriously looking for something more meaningful in life. We sat down comfortably, and he immediately exclaimed, "I was rather surprised by what you said to the American visitors yesterday!"

He added, "How can you do away with our ancient heritage, this knowledge handed down by our ancestors throughout history? Dada, don't you believe in our Hindu religion and traditions?"

"Definitely not," I replied. "The old traditions had their own place but are now obsolete and must be brushed aside. The spiritual challenge is to discover that which is the truth, a fresh way of living not at all tied to the past. The past is the denial of the present, the new."

After our serious conversation on this subject, which lasted for about an hour, he said to me, "Dada, nobody here in this country is going to understand you. Perhaps, if you go to America, or to Europe, people will get more out of these insights on spirituality." Suddenly he asked, "Dada, are you interested in going to America?" I thought he was joking, so I just smiled.

He added, "Your message will be received by Americans and Europeans more openly than by the people here in India. You should go to those continents." I simply laughed at his comment, thinking that it was somewhat sarcastic rather than realistic.

Before he left he asked if I needed anything. I replied that I did not use many things in my daily life, and that at this time I had no requirements, nor did I need any help. He reiterated that he had many friends in Mumbai, and just to let him know if any need arose. He gave me his name and address, saying that I could write to him at any time if I needed anything at all.

Mr. Shah went back to Kolkata, but I remained intrigued by his fascinating idea – a visit to America! In remembering his words I really thought that he was joking, maybe even a little critical in saying that I could not talk to Indians about this new understanding. He was very friendly, and we talked sincerely about many things, so surely he could not be joking. I often wondered how he thought I could go to America, but later on I just forgot about this person and his comments.

I was therefore amazed when, within three months, Mr. Shah unexpectedly showed up again in Mahableshwar to visit me. What's more, he even declared enthusiastically that he could definitely arrange for me to go to the United States! He even knew of a way to go without incurring any cost for the passage. I was astonished, and replied, "That's very well, Mr. Shah! But let me tell you that I know absolutely no one in America, and I can't imagine what I would do there."

Yet, Mr. Shah insisted that I should consider this matter seriously. Again I became intrigued by his offer and by his strange insistence on it. The idea of going to America was really beyond my imagination. He urged me to ponder over his proposal seriously since he knew the managing director of Scindia Steam Navigation Company, which sent ships frequently to America. He informed me that he himself was the personal jeweler for that director, a prestigious woman who lived in Mumbai. Through his friendship with her he could request passage for me on a cargo ship going to the United States.

Mr. Shah told me that the founding president of the Hare Krishna movement, Sheela Prabhupada, was given a complimentary passage on one of the cargo ships traveling to America. The director of the company, Mrs. Sumatiben Morarji, would be open to grant me too, such a complimentary ticket. He felt very certain about this because of his personal contact with her. He continued to insist, and I finally had to consider his proposal as being genuine and a real possibility.

Still I was mystified about what I would do in America. I had a little money saved from maintaining my few beehives, which was enough only for my daily needs. How would I deal with the expenses of visiting America? It puzzled me. I certainly never had the desire to go to the U.S. or to any other country. Although many people dream of adventure in far-off lands, I did not. I lived simply, happily, peacefully, with no yearning to go anywhere at all. But I was struck by his enthusiasm and by his repeated urging that I take this unusual step.

Three or four months later, Mr. Shah again appeared suddenly and informed me that he had already talked to Mrs. Morarji about me. She had agreed to consider his proposal. He felt very encouraged and excited about these developments. Now I really had to face the possibility of making this amazing trip! A few months later he informed me that he had everything arranged. All I had to do was prepare my papers and show up at the main office of the shipping company. He said that the next time he traveled to Mumbai, he would take me to meet the director personally because she wanted to talk to me. Now the ball was in my court! This amazing travel adventure had taken root.

As promised, Mr. Shah came back and took me to Mumbai to meet the head of the steamship line. I felt quite nervous going from Mahableshwar to

Mumbai for this unusual meeting. During our conversation Mrs. Morarji asked me if I actually wanted to go to the United States, and if I would be able to stay on the ship for the six weeks of the trip. I replied that I did not feel it would be difficult to travel on the ship for that length of time. After some casual inquiries she informed me that she would be happy to secure me a complimentary ticket.

By this time, I too got excited about the prospect of an ocean voyage to see something of the new world. I would go as a simple tourist, with no plan to talk to anyone about spiritual matters. That seemed entirely out of the question.

Next, I had to figure out how to get the necessary documents to travel to another country. After an inquiry at the Indian office of internal affairs, I found that it would be incredibly difficult for me to get a passport. Living anonymously in the mountain jungle for many years, I was almost a non-entity to the Indian government! In those days, way back in 1975, one had to be somebody fairly important to get an Indian passport. I naively thought that when a big company provides a ticket, the passport and tourist visa would come automatically. But I soon learned that one must have an established identity in order to obtain a passport. I had no food ration card, no tenancy rights, no credit cards or bank account, not even a birth certificate, and thus no identity in my own society. I was just a man from the jungle.

Mr. Shah tried to help me, but he, too, found that it would be very difficult. I had no income, no house, nothing to qualify me as a regular citizen of my birth country. He consulted with the steamship company officials who said they could not help us either. They would only be able to certify the round-trip cargo ship ticket. The passport could be issued only by the government of India. Every official I met seemed to think that I was not eligible. They suggested I get police letters showing my good character, and other kinds of proof of my worthiness in order to try to have a passport issued under special circumstances.

Thinking that it would be impossible for me to acquire an Indian passport and U.S. visa, I almost abandoned the notion of going to America. I did not want to rely on my family's support. With their lands and money it would have been easy to get a passport. But I was no longer part of my family. Instead, I was on my own. I knew that I could not honestly do that, so I told everyone that a trip to the U.S. was not meant for me.

Again, after a few days, Mr. Shah came with the news that a travel agent had told him of a way to solve this problem. If I had the support of some rich person in India who would take the financial responsibility for me, and if that application was sent to the President of India, and if he gave approval, the passport would be issued. This brought a faint ray of hope, but where would such a wealthy person be found?

An interval passed, waiting for something very improbable to happen. It seemed to be an impossible dream. Meanwhile my simple life in Mahableshwar continued.

It was summer time, when the climate in India is very warm, while the weather in Mahableshwar is very cold. Situated at an altitude of 5000 feet and covered by a thick forest, Mahableshwar attracts many wealthy tourists on account of its pure mountain air and fresh, invigorating climate. Many tourists also visit Madhusagar apiary to purchase pure honey and to witness a live demonstration of the way bees work together in a hive. Mr. Rajda, owner of the apiary and honey center, often offered guided tours to important visitors.

One day a big industrialist from Mumbai, Mr. Govindjibhai Shroff, came to visit the bee center. He owned Excel Industries Mumbai, manufacturers of chemicals and fertilizers. He was also a close relative of Mr. Rajda. After showing him the main bee center, Mr. Rajda brought him to my little place where I had my ten beehives. Mr. Shroff became inquisitive about me and what I was doing staying alone in a corner of the forest. He asked me many questions. My replies to him regarding my life, its purpose and the play of divine energy intrigued him immensely.

During the conversation, Mr. Rajda casually mentioned my effort to obtain a passport, a tourist visa to America and my need for a sponsor. On his own, Mr. Govindjibhai Shroff said to Mr. Rajda, "If Dada has received a complimentary ticket and now needs a sponsor for the passport, then I can take care of it. I will find the right sponsor or else I myself will stand as guarantee for him." He straightaway invited me to come to his house in Mumbai and promised to help with all the rest of the paperwork.

What a dramatic change in the situation! Suddenly the clouds of uncertainty were blown away, and out came the sunshine.

Soon after, Mr. Shroff invited me to Mumbai to stay with his family. Subsequently with the help of a prominent lawyer, Mr. Shroff made an application stating that he would be responsible for me in the U.S. He sent this to the President of India, and finally, with this guarantee, the government issued my Indian passport. Thereafter, I became more optimistic about the American adventure. With my complimentary round-trip ticket and now my passport, I thought the battle was won!

Then a new hurdle sprang up: I still could not get a U.S. tourist visa. On my visa application I stated that I would be in America for only two months, yet the consulate would not approve my application on the grounds of not having the requisite foreign exchange. Various friends naively collected a modest amount – enough for me to have some money during my short visit. However, being in Indian rupees and not U.S. dollars, it was of no use, as in those days, foreign exchange had to come from abroad and could not be purchased in the market. Here came another crisis: the foreign exchange. Only official foreign exchange of at least $300 in my pocket would satisfy the U.S. consulate.

Since I had no contacts outside India, there was no way to obtain foreign currency. The dream of America began to fade away once more. At this point I definitely felt that struggling against all these bureaucratic obstacles was not worthwhile. Somewhat disappointed, I left Mumbai and returned to my usual life in Mahableshwar.

Not long thereafter, one day as I went on my daily morning walk, to my surprise I ran into my friend U.G. Krishnamurti. We had not seen one another since our Theosophical days together, over 15 years ago, so we embraced happily. Sitting on a roadside rock, we talked for a while and tried to catch up on each other's news. However, we soon realized that we had too much to share, so we decided to meet again at leisure. Later that evening he came to visit me at my cottage.

We had a long chat over the honey drink I made from my homegrown sweet nectar. He was astonished to know that my ten beehives were supporting my life in the forest. U.G. marveled at the way these few bees provided me with all the daily necessities, leaving me free for the whole day.

We remembered our old friends from the Theosophical Society. We talked about the time when we used to walk together with our friend Dr. Adhikaram from Colombo to attend the talks of J. Krishnamurti at Vasant Vihar, Madras. U.G. asked about me and where I had disappeared all these years. I recounted briefly the history and geography of my adventures, and talked about my experience of the explosion. I told him how I was driven by the need to have first-hand experience. After reading several books and listening to Living Masters for many years, I had come to realize that I was merely echoing others. There was a wide gulf between a verbal understanding of their message and an understanding based on my subjective, first-hand experience. I saw the fluctuations of my mind – how it latches on to anything new, and then immediately takes quite a different turn when it is drawn by another new and powerful idea, which may be totally unlike the first. I saw the fallacy of depending on the changeable mind because it is a victim of strong conditioning and can make one believe in just about anything. I began to realize that subjective, first-hand experiencing is the only reality.

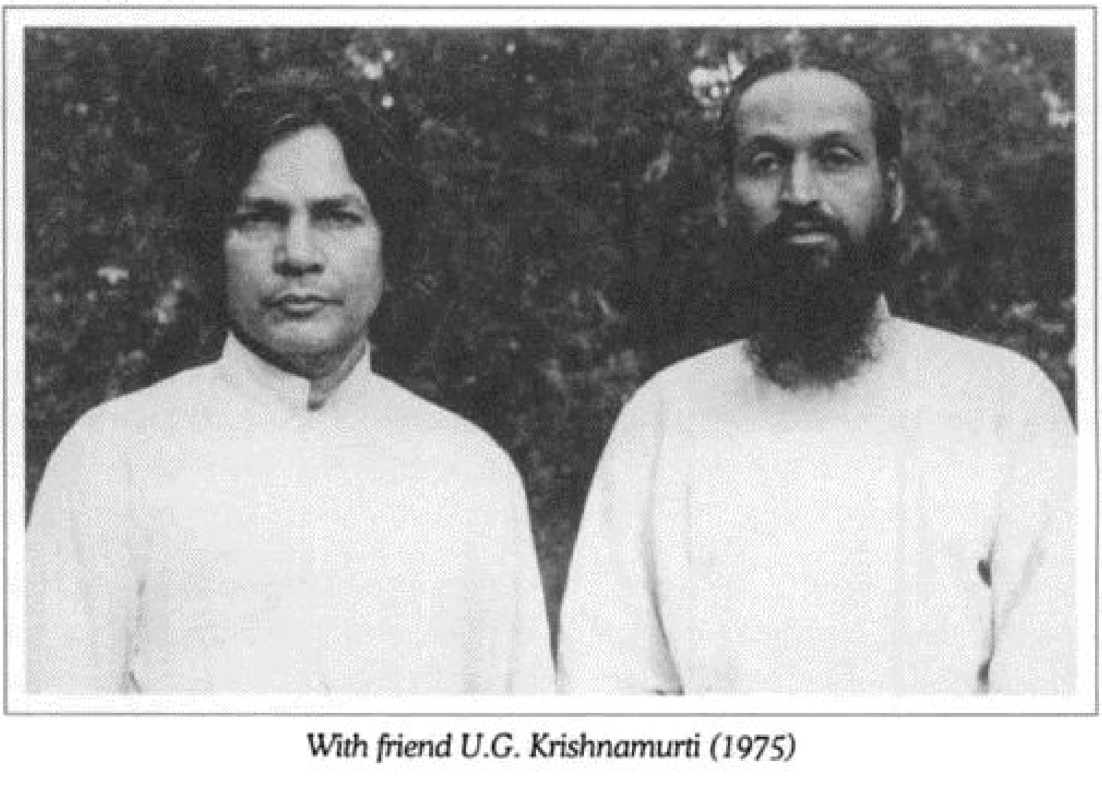
I had been conditioned by books on Theosophy and then by the teachings of J.Krishnamurti. However, I was very restless, having lost confidence in the mind as an instrument of understanding. I began to wonder what would be the way out of this impasse. I wanted to have a foolproof experiential understanding of life without agreeing or disagreeing with the views of others. Therefore I set aside everything that I had read or gathered from great spiritual teachers. I also left my home, belongings, family and friends – everything that I imagined to be 'mine'.

With very little that was personal, I went to a mountain top and sat with myself in total solitude, holding the torch of alert awareness. There I confronted my own mind and became aware of its subtle contradictions and self-deceptions. I pondered, questioned, searched, meditated and discovered my blind spots in thinking and feeling. Surprisingly, while looking closely into the working of my chattering mind, I perceived that a part of myself, deep down in my center, is mysteriously very silent, unperturbed and aloof from all the outer happenings.

U.G. nodded understandingly, and his eyes twinkled. He urged me to go on. I told him how I continued to explore this hidden part of me further. One fine day, something exploded within me and I experienced a huge surge of vibrant energy which brought with it unprecedented bliss, serenity and intuitive understanding – a flash of Truth. I have been carrying that other dimensional energy ever since and am very happy with it. I no longer feel the need to accept, question or fight the opinions of others as now this energy has given me a taste of Truth.

U.G listened very intently and expressed happiness about what I had experienced.

Then things came around to present times and I told him about the offer I had to go to the United States, that ended with a ticket and passport in my hand, but no tourist visa. So I had dropped the plan. He interrupted me and said emphatically not to give up. He showed much enthusiasm and interest in my going to the U.S. But I replied that I did not know a single person there. What could I do there alone, I wondered! He laughed and said mischievously, as usual, "Don't worry, Gavand, some lady will show up to take care of you!" I thought that he, too, was joking.



With friend U.G. Krishnamurti (1975)

Then I mentioned to him the visa problem, of not having the official foreign exchange that they required. Immediately he asked me how much money I needed, and I told him it was $300. He said not to worry, that soon he would be going to Switzerland, and from there he would send me that amount of money. I should receive it in about three weeks to clear my way. It was amazing that he had shown up out of the blue that day, after so many years. Late that evening, while departing, U.G. invited me home to lunch the next day.

The next morning for lunch, I visited U.G.'s place, which, as it turned out, was not very far from my cottage. Valentine, his caretaker friend whom I knew also, was there, and we three had a good get-together. In two days, he was to leave for Switzerland via Mumbai.

At the time of parting I said, "U.G., it seems that you came to Mahableshwar only to solve my problem of foreign exchange."

"Probably," he said, and then reminded me, "Do not drop the plan of visiting America. If you run into any difficulty, you can inform me in Switzerland. I will be in Saanen at the address I gave you. If you want to visit me in Europe, feel free to come and stay with me. You will surely like Switzerland, as it is a beautiful country."

I thanked him and said, "U.G., first let me reach America. I don't know what is awaiting me there." Exchanging good will, we parted with an assurance to meet somewhere soon.

Within a short time, I received a check from the Reserve Bank of India in Mumbai for $300 in real U.S. dollars! U.G. had sent it to me as promised, within only two weeks. With this, plus my ticket and passport, I was finally able to get a tourist visa, valid for three months instead of the two that I had originally asked for. I could not believe how things were falling into place. It seemed almost miraculous that I could go from the mountain jungles of India to the sparkling shores of Kolkata, finally to embark on a voyage to the new world of America!

Now, knowing the date of my departure, I returned to Mahableshwar to prepare the little house and beehives for the period of my absence. How could I know or say how long I would be gone? Less than the authorized three months? More than three months? What would I be doing there? Would I travel around to see a few places in such a huge country, not knowing anyone? I pondered these things somewhat, although there was no way to plan anything.

Yet somehow, somewhere in me I felt a kind of confidence that Life was carrying me on this voyage. This whole trip – how it came about so unexpectedly, the completion of seemingly impossible paperwork, the complimentary ticket – this was certainly an amazing occurrence. Something larger than myself seemed to be carrying me beyond the horizon.

After saying goodbye to my friends in Mahableshwar, I went to Mumbai and stayed with Dr. Uma Rao. She was a loving, caring and motherly woman. Her son, Jai Rao, was my close friend, visiting me in Mahableshwar frequently. Jai showed good interest in spiritual understanding. He had an American friend named Ken Reed who had lived with Jai in India when he visited. Ken was a good friend of the whole Rao family.

Hearing of my plan to visit the U.S., Dr. Rao and Jai wrote to Ken Reed about my trip. They requested him to receive me at the San Francisco harbor and take care of me during my three months in America.

Dr. Rao and many other admirers in Mumbai were very enthusiastic about my trip, and I got caught up in their joyous feelings. I began to realize that I did not have proper clothing for an ocean voyage or for staying in the United States, with its unknown climate, not even knowing what part of the country I would be in. Various people helped me decide and purchase what was minimally necessary. They were very excited about this opportunity that had come my way!

America seemed like the other end of the earth to me. I had no way of knowing what lay ahead in that unknown country with no friends there. This would certainly be a different kind of challenge for me.

I was scheduled to sail from Kolkata on a large cargo ship named 'Jalamoti', meaning 'pearl in the water'. In order to get to Kolkata, I had to go by train from Mumbai, a long trip of about 40 hours. On the day of my departure I arrived at Victoria station carrying only two small traveling bags. To my great surprise about 50 to 60 people had gathered to see me off on my voyage! They presented me with beautiful flower garlands, all colorful and fragrant, which they draped around my neck. Many had brought carefully packed boxes of food and delicacies for me to take on the ship, knowing it would be a trip of more than six weeks on the ocean. It was a touching good-bye at the Mumbai train station, with the flowers, good wishes, food, and the traditional application of 'kumkum' or sacred red powder on my forehead.

In 1975, crossing the great Pacific Ocean on a ship bound for America was an adventure that did not happen to many people. It was truly to be a voyage into the unknown. I had spent years in exploration of the inner. But now my voyage was to explore the outer in an unknown country using a foreign language to communicate.

Finally, the train reached Kolkata after a lengthy trip. Mr. Shah, the friend who had secured the complimentary ticket, welcomed me warmly. Mr. Rajda and his family were also present to receive me. I stayed with the Rajda family, and they helped me with proper clothing and supplies for the trip. I ended up taking only two small bags, which had to be inspected at customs before boarding the ship.

A section of well-wishers bidding me farewell at Mumbai railway station (July 1975)

We arrived at the dock after spending time in the complicated city traffic of Kolkata. I was immediately impressed by Jalamoti, even from a distance. It was such a huge ship, with all her decks and cargo holds. Jalamoti carried grains and other products bound for Hong Kong, Taiwan and other places, before heading across the ocean to America.On July 5, 1975, Mr. Shah, Mr. Rajda and their families came to see me off on the pier. They wished me a safe journey and whispered lovingly that this would be a very happy and important event in my life. Then I turned and headed for the vessel that would be my home for the next two months.

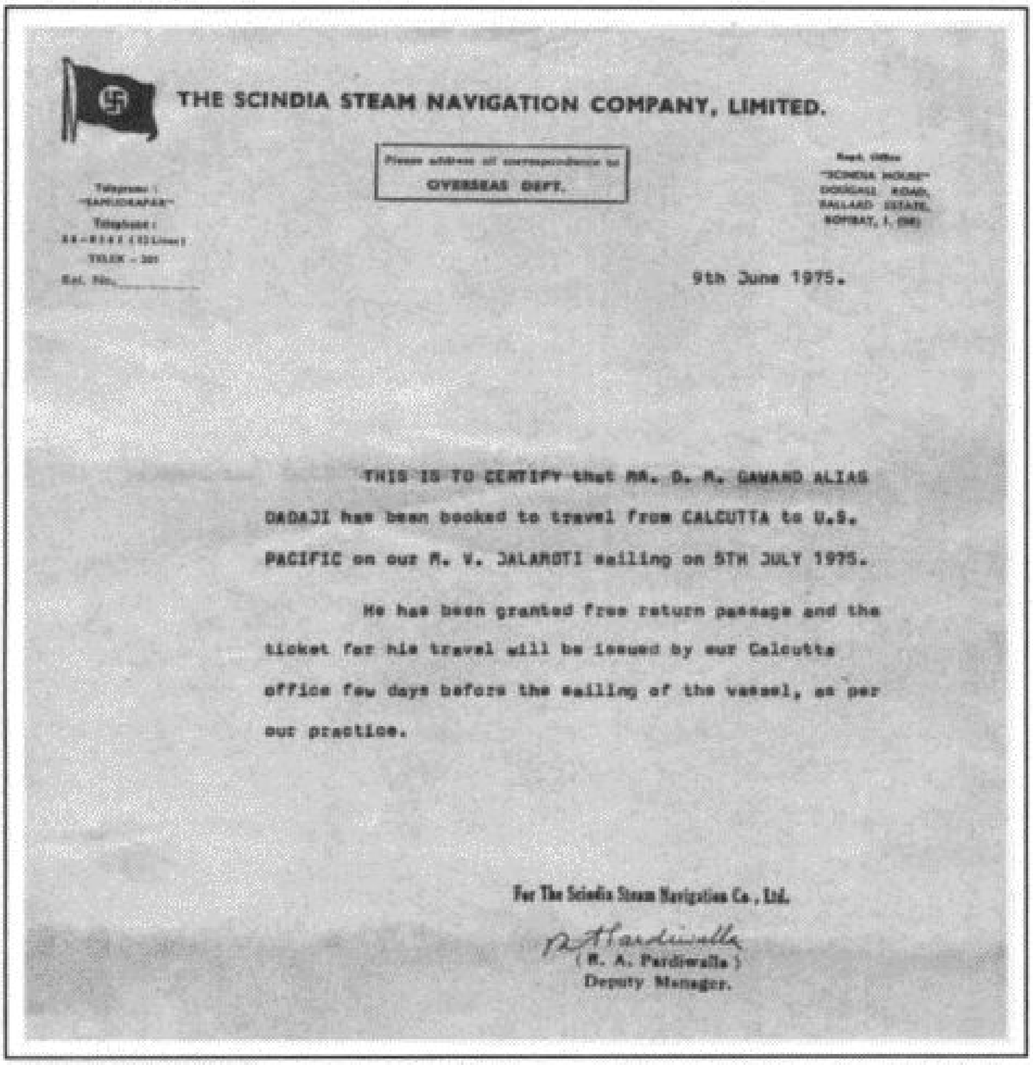
The very first act of going over from the pier to the ship proved quite a unique experience. A long, narrow wooden bridge hung between the ship and shore. To get across, I had to walk over this bridge very carefully, keeping my balance while carrying my two bags. It swayed freely, wobbling with every step. I had never encountered such a bridge before.

Once on the ship, I met the purser who received me and took me to his office. There he explained the rules of the ship, where each area was, the timing of meals and certain safety precautions. He inquired after my food preferences – what type of vegetarian meals I would like. He then escorted me to my cabin, which to my surprise was none other than the owner's suite! I had assumed it would be a simple single cabin with just a bed, much like the ship's officers. But this large suite had a huge bed, big dining table, well-stocked refrigerator as well as my own bathroom and shower. I could not believe I was to enjoy this truly splendid and quite unexpected accommodation. The bed itself was certainly the biggest I had ever seen! And air conditioning, too. What luxury!

Jalamoti would embark later that evening, so in the meantime I took a walk around the ship. It was a surprise to realize how big cargo vessels are, like a five-story building. The size of it amazed me and also the fact that I would be on this ship for the next six weeks. I felt a deep sense of gratitude towards all the people who had taken such an interest in me and who had done so much to bring me to this point. I wondered how all of this could have happened, since I never had any idea or desire of undertaking such an adventurous journey. It was as if I had been floating along these last months, carried by Life to fulfill some unknown plan.

Now I would be heading out to sea on an ocean pearl taking me beyond the horizon. This was a new part of my voyage on the unknown and uncharted ocean of Life. I went out and stood on the deck, facing the vast expanse of water, sensing the powerful ship beneath my feet. Never had I felt so keenly and with wonder how Life is in fact an uncharted reality.

Later that evening, as the ship embarked, the adventure started with the ear-splitting sound of the ship's loud siren. We were off! Slowly the graceful giant pulled away from shore, and I watched as the lights of Kolkata gradually faded into the distance. What an amazing experience for this man from the Mahableshwar forest! That first night on the ocean I had a deep feeling of thankfulness, wonder and reverence.



THE SCINDIA STEAM NAVIGATION COMPANY, LIMITED.

Please address all correspondence to
OVERSEAS DEPT.

9th June 1975.

THIS IS TO CERTIFY that MR. D. M. GAWAND ALIAS DADAJI has been booked to travel from CALCUTTA to U.S. PACIFIC on our M. V. JALAMOTI sailing on 5TH JULY 1975.

He has been granted free return passage and the ticket for his travel will be issued by our Calcutta office few days before the sailing of the vessel, as per our practice.

For The Scindia Steam Navigation Co., Ltd.

R. A. Pardiwalla
(R. A. Pardiwalla)
Deputy Manager.

Letter from Scindia shipping offering me complimentary passage to the US.

TWELVE

VOYAGE: BEYOND THE HORIZON

A Glimpse of Eternity

With the shores of India slowly retreating into the distance, I turned to explore my new home Jalamoti, pearl of the ocean. Everywhere the crew worked busily to ensure that the ship was ready for this long voyage. I watched them with great interest, each attending to his assigned task. There were about 80 crewmembers and I was the only passenger. They regarded me with curiosity, perhaps wondering about this different-looking fellow staying all alone in the spacious owner's suite.

After walking around the ship, I finally went back to my cabin. Soon the bell rang, apparently announcing dinnertime. I wondered what I should do, where I should proceed for dinner. Just then a waiter delivered the food directly to my cabin. In came the cart, neatly arranged with gleaming plates and serving bowls heaped to the brim. I could not believe the amount and kinds of food he brought. It was vegetarian food as I had requested, with soup, different kinds of bread, salads, various main dishes, vegetables, fruits and dessert like caramel pudding, chocolate cake, etc. Now I, who had been eating my simple sprouted wheat and vegetables in a mountain cabin, would be dining on a five-course meal!

The first night on board I spent looking with intrigue at the total uncertainty that lay ahead. I had not desired or planned any of this. Rather, Life itself was taking me on its wings. Carried along by some unknown force, I definitely did not act with any kind of conscious planning on my part. To ride on this uncharted ocean of Life, I felt that I must remain open, without any ambition of mind. I had a feeling of deep surrender to Life, seeing how it was carrying me in Its own mysterious way. My own life appeared to be on a larger voyage, one where I had faith in what Life held in store for me.

That first night passed almost sleeplessly for me, despite the large comfortable bed. I had no fear or cause for concern. Rather, inside me surged excitement, anticipation and wonder.

Nonetheless, I got up refreshed in the morning and immediately went outside to watch the ocean. A beautiful, fresh-looking seascape greeted me, with the golden sun smiling. We were still within sight of shore, and I spotted a few private craft and small coal-carrying steamers cruising up and down the coastline. I was struck by the vast expanse of ocean before me, with flocks of birds flying in all directions. The sky shone a hazy red, and sparkling sunlight danced on the ocean waves. The brisk ocean air was exhilarating to me, and I felt a deep sense of peace and contentment. Rejoicing in the intense freshness of the morning, I stayed on deck for quite a while.

Then I returned to my room at the appointed hour for breakfast. The waiter, a young boy of perhaps 22, impeccably dressed, appeared with a big cart laden with food. Again I was amazed at the large quantity and variety of food. There was porridge, a kettle of milk, cheese, jam, a large slab of butter, potato chips with ketchup, fruit juices, cream biscuits and fruitcake along with a basket of fresh fruits and finally a kettle of tea with cream and sugar cubes. I requested that in future would he please bring me only some toast or bread, a banana, some juice, not even any tea, and that would be fine. He looked at me with astonishment and asked me if I did not like this breakfast. He explained that lunch would not be served until 1:00 p.m., and so he was afraid that the requested food would not be enough until that time. I thanked him for the breakfast, reiterating my simple needs for the future, and assured him that I definitely would survive just fine until lunchtime.

He arrived promptly at 1:00 p.m., again with a big cart loaded with a variety of continental dishes, including soups, vegetable quiche, pastas, club sandwiches, cheesecake and other rich desserts. And again I gently told him that I did not need so many dishes or this much food. He seemed reluctant to bring me less. I asked only that he bring me a little tea at 4:00 p.m., and then nothing until dinner at 7 p.m. He had filled my cabin refrigerator with fruit, soft drinks, chocolates and other items to snack on, and even asked me if I would like anything more for the refrigerator in order to eat at my leisure. All this, in addition to the Indian goodies which had been presented to me at the farewell gatherings in Mumbai and Kolkata!

My friends had prepared special Bengali sweets and other delicious items, neatly packed for my trip. Apparently, everyone felt I would lack food on the voyage. Instead there was so much! Right away I saw that I could not begin to eat everything, risking my health by overeating just to finish it all. I was conscious of my eating habits from the very beginning. The cabin boy remained incredulous at my wish to limit my food intake. He eventually came to understand my needs, but he simply could not believe that someone could be contented with such small meals.

In the initial days, I walked along all the various decks in search of a convenient place to sit alone. Finally, I found a particularly wonderful spot on the 'monkey deck.' This open space, high atop the fifth deck, afforded a view of most of the ocean in one glance. The vastness of that external panorama used to affect me deeply somewhere within. The enormity of the space, horizon and sky, and the expanse of water below, gave me an incredible sense of timelessness. That immensity evoked a profound inner response in me, reverberating through my entire being. It seemed as if every cell in my body came alive, pulsating with a new energy. I gloried in this marvelous experience, which, undoubtedly, came from another dimension, bringing back memories of my uplifting experiences in the hut of Mount Sajjangad.

Many times, while sitting quietly on the monkey deck, I got into new depths of my inner space. Then, surprisingly, the inner and outer space became one whole experience, as a result of which, for a while, I felt the unfragmented totality of my existence. This awakened a sense of innate peace, now with a new profundity. The vast and unending horizon in front of me gave me a feel of the mystery of infinity.

Here on the monkey deck, face to face with that vastness and openness all around, I watched my thought activity wriggle like a little worm, so insignificant compared to the immensity around me. I saw how the entire idea/activity syndrome is such a tiny, limited and mediocre movement, springing from past memory alone. My depth and clarity of perception increased, and I saw more and more, how thinking is nothing but a wishful, illusory activity, springing from past, unfulfilled experiences. That vastness became the teacher, showing me that there is a reality of an unimaginable dimension, and to be one with that enormity is a blissful and contented state. Time came to a halt for a moment, and the vastness gave me an inkling of what timelessness would be.

During this time I spent my days mostly alone, watching my thoughts as well as observing all that was around me. Unknown to me at that time, this period on the ocean was preparing me for landing on the shores of America and what awaited me there.

Part of this preparation involved simply the use of the English language. On the ship I had to use only English on a daily basis in order to communicate with the captain and crew. Also, I had to adjust to the different food. This was not Indian food, nor the simple meals I had been eating for so many years. Now I had a lot of variety, with new spices, fried items and heavy combinations, all very tasty. However, the food had a strong effect on my body, as it was too rich, though completely vegetarian.

Sitting on that open deck, facing the immensity of the sky and ocean, I got into a new depth and intensity in my inward journey as well. It created in me a sense of expansiveness and gave me the confidence to face anything that came along within and without. This confidence was not cultivated through practice or experimentation, nor was it the outcome of knowledge or learned technique. Rather, it reflected a strength born from new depths of inwardness, from the fact of being rooted deep within myself. At the same time, I actually saw the littleness of each thought against the backdrop of that vast enormity. The cluster of many such tiny thoughts poses as the big 'ME' which is actually fictitious and non-existent – a total illusion!

There I sat, alone on the monkey deck, face to face with the boundless horizon. I loved to watch the vast night sky as well. There would be innumerable stars sparkling like bright jewels against the jet-black sky. Completely bewitched, I would watch them for several hours as they moved slowly across the sky. Then the moon would come up and pour its silver beams on the calm waters below, which looked ethereal in the dazzling moonshine. I wondered how all these stars and planets, whirling from time immemorial at an unimaginable speed across the firmament, never collide into one another. Our very own Earth ceaselessly turns round itself and around the sun and yet we hardly feel the impact of its rapid double movement. Right from childhood, I had been intrigued as to how such massive and huge stars and planets are suspended in empty space without any support. Another point of wonder was the regularity and discipline with which day followed night and seasons appeared unfailingly, in the same sequence, year after year. Watching the enchanting sky-scape from the monkey deck of Jalamoti, I learned to accept that I was too small and insignificant to understand the full significance of these awe-inspiring cosmic phenomena.

The captain came around often, usually saying something simple like hello or good evening. But after a while he became a little curious, seeing me there alone most of the time, quite contented and relaxed. Finally he actually stopped to inquire after me, asking how I liked my cabin and food. I responded sincerely that all was quite fine, much more than what I needed or had ever anticipated.

Suddenly, he asked me straight out, "What do you do here, sitting alone like this for hours? Don't you ever feel bored or lonely?" I replied, "Not at all, sir. I enjoy sitting here very much. For me, this time is energizing, creative. To be with one's own totality of energy, without any fragmentation, is to be filled with a feeling of abundance and fullness, which is happiness. I enjoy it." He seemed quite baffled by my words and barely responded. My reply must have sounded like Chinese or Russian to him!

Thus our acquaintance grew, and the captain frequently offered me books to read, mostly on oceanography, fish and life in the ocean. I accepted his offer and went through some of the pictorial ones. A book on the habits of sharks and whales I found informative and very interesting. The big ocean fish too have their own world, with loves and hates, enmities and wars!

One day the captain invited me to visit the bridge to see all the instruments for commanding the ship. He showed me his powerful telescope, and then asked me more about myself. He wanted to know what I had been doing in India and what was my profession. This I found a bit hard to answer. He asked me if I belonged to the Christian religion. I told him that I was born into a Hindu family, but that now I was neither Hindu nor Christian, nor did I subscribe to any organized religion. I told him that I did not consider myself Indian either, although my passport referred to me as 'Indian.' I said I did not know what 'Indianness' was as I always found such labels shallow and restrictive, born out of tradition and habit.

That particular day I spent quite some time in his pilot-cabin on the bridge. As the captain felt curious to know more about me, I took the opportunity to answer him at some length, seeing his genuine interest in all of this.

I told him that my whole attempt in India had been to find humanness free from all dogmas. By birth we are born into some culture, some religion, and we are slowly conditioned by those chains of influence. We then accept the established patterns within the confines of that culture. But I had begun to observe that all these boundaries of culture are limitations and bondages. Now I understood that real truth lies in freedom from all such programmed shackles.

For centuries we have been trying to live as a thorough Hindu, a true Muslim, a perfect Christian etc, according to the norms laid down by particular religions. Civilizations have practiced these religions for centuries. But with all the disciplines of culture and religion, have we evolved, individually or collectively, into perfect Hindus or Christians? We are all still struggling to overcome our fears, hatred, enmity, greed, desires and problems. Religion has not helped us much to create a truly humane and spiritual society, free of problems, and able to experience love and peace.

We talked about society and the problems each one faces all over the world. I spoke to him about the futility of our conditioning, whether it is by way of culture or religion or ethics. I pointed out that this conditioning itself has made man more dogmatic, nationalistic and arrogant.

Only in finding a radically new way of living can mankind realize peace and happiness. I told him that I felt the time had come to dissolve these walls of conditioning, to pull down the barriers, to discover the oneness of us all, to experience what it is to be a universal human being. We don't need to live in a Hindu society or a Christian society, but rather to discover the freedom of global human society. We need not have any divisions between religions or nationalities, but instead a relationship of freedom and love.

The captain listened intently but never made any comments by way of a response. Perhaps my views were too different from his own traditional beliefs.

Steadfastly our ship Jalamoti advanced over the ocean, day and night, speeding along, breaking through high waves or sometimes gliding on a calm ocean surface, always maintaining her balance and poise. At other time she faced the high waves, going up and down and tilting sideways like a drunken person. All these different moods of the mighty ocean and the various dancing styles of the little 'pearl' entertained me greatly.

The crewmembers were regularly made to do exercises in order to prepare for storms and other emergencies. They put on life jackets and got into the lifeboats as if ready to face whatever became necessary. Each crewmember had to play his own role and follow the orders of the captain in every critical situation. I, as passenger, had to do certain things as well. I participated in these practice runs, quickly putting on my life jacket and jumping onto a special buoy as my lifeboat. This frequent exercise kept us prepared for any eventuality.

Finally we reached the beautiful harbor of Singapore. There they announced that the ship would be in harbor for at least five days to undergo a checkup and repairs. I received this news with joy. It gave us a needed break from the constant movement and rocking and rolling of the ship. I got excited about seeing Singapore, my first port outside of India. We anchored some distance from the shore and then reached the land in a smaller boat. I asked my waiter to make me a sandwich, put some fruit and a can of juice in a bag, and I went ashore to go around the city.

Many tourists filled the streets of Singapore, eating, drinking and making merry. I saw lots of seafood restaurants with huge colorful signboards written in Chinese and English announcing their specialties. These shops had big water tanks with live crabs and a variety of fish swimming in them. The customers chose the one they wanted to eat. Then the cook picked out the chosen fish from the tank, killed it by dipping it in boiling water and cooked it as desired by the customer. I felt absolutely shocked at how people obviously enjoyed this way of eating. Those tourists looked affluent and well educated, yet they ate fish without any thought or consideration of the fact that fish, too, are living entities. I could not believe how people could choose to kill these living creatures and then rave about how delicious they were. Their only criteria for good food appeared to be its taste.

To my now-vegetarian mind, that scene amounted to sheer cruelty. The act of selecting the fish or crab and then boiling or frying it to death, watching mercilessly the scene of pain, suffering and the agony of death, struck me as simply barbaric. It shocked me especially since I had been living in a jungle peacefully amongst a variety of animals, cooking and eating simple grains and vegetables, growing most of my own food. I had come a long way indeed from my own hunting days.

Singapore appeared to be a clean city, with orderly roads and much natural beauty. Colorful trees neatly lined the streets. My first experience of a city outside of India was like seeing a new world. The people looked very active and disciplined, everyone busily going places very purposefully. This presented a new scene for me, because in India people seem more leisurely, standing in groups and talking, or sitting and chatting a lot of the time. Here in Singapore I first experienced a fast pace of life, with people moving quickly in all directions.

I went to a beautiful park and sat on a bench to eat my sandwich and fruit, not purchasing anything on shore. While walking around I enjoyed seeing the different varieties of flowers in the well-maintained parks and watching people in their colorful attire. Then I returned to the ship in the evening. In the next few days I further explored the city, visiting some Buddhist temples and other places of tourist interest. It was a five-day interval of walking on stable land and seeing something different than just water and sky. To walk on firm ground delighted me after three weeks of constant rolling underfoot. It was an enjoyable and refreshing change. Finally, all the necessary repairs were finished on the ship and we headed onward again, destination Hong Kong.

For two or three days we sailed along smoothly. Then suddenly, on the fourth day there was an alarming announcement on the loudspeaker by the captain, forecasting a storm within the next few hours. The captain summoned all the crewmembers to the deck and addressed them, giving strict guidelines about what each one had to do. He stressed that according to the weather forecast a very big storm was approaching and that they should get ready to face this serious challenge. Since I had no idea what a big storm at sea would be like and how it would affect the ship, I wondered about this warning.

Early in the evening the wind changed. We felt it become stronger and stronger, and then rain set in, increasing steadily to a downpour. The ship began to make very violent movements, abruptly rising and falling on the huge turbulent waves. Within a couple of hours the intensity of the storm had increased dramatically. I remained in my cabin. Luckily all the furniture was fixed to the floor or the walls. Otherwise, it would have been tossed about, all over the room! I found it difficult even to stay seated. At dinner time the food arrived as usual, but my waiter politely suggested that I eat a little less during this stormy situation. I heeded his advice and ate much less than usual. I asked him how long the storm would last. He replied that he did not know, only that it was expected to be a very heavy storm, continuing at least throughout the night.

To be on a ship in such turbulent weather again presented a new experience. All the crewmembers actively attended to their specific duties during this challenging time. However I chose to remain in my room, trying to sit, but mostly having to lie down on the big bed. I felt all the fury of the wind and rain as the ocean knocked the ship about. Now I experienced the mighty ocean in a new way. Since it was not possible to lie still on the bed or to sleep, I remained awake all night long.

Again in the morning I ate very little. Instead of abating, the storm had intensified during the night. With determination I gathered all my strength and went out to try and walk a little along the corridors to observe this terribly stressful situation. The torrential rain and wind rocked the ship from side to side. Stunned by this savage drama of the elements and unable to keep my balance, I somehow crawled my way back to my room. As I was trying to reach my bed, taking one careful step at a time and keeping my balance with both arms spread open, a big wave dashed against the ship's hull. The huge jolt hurled me down on the floor. It was really a very serious event, but it happened so instantly and my falling flat on the floor appeared to me so comic that I could not help laughing at my dramatic fall. At the same time, I realized that I could have hit against the refrigerator and hurt myself badly. The whole experience humbled me.

By noon the storm had become so violent that I could not even walk in my cabin. This created a very dangerous situation. It amazed me to see how the wind and waves tossed Jalamoti about so brutally. This ship, which had been moving confidently and with such poise all these days, was now being thrown about like a toy by the powerful ocean.

After enduring the violent movements of the ship for many hours, my body was finding it difficult to tolerate more of it. I was mostly accustomed to the regular rolling motion of the ship, but now, with the storm, the unusual jerks and complex churning movements affected me strongly. The ship moved sharply from side to side and up and down, constantly changing in direction and force. My body struggled every moment to keep its balance and maintain equilibrium. The body, muscles and nervous system are not used to sustaining such unusual rattling movements and savage jolts. Hunger vanished as the constant turbulence started to take its toll. I began to lose whatever hope I had as the constant movements became increasingly more violent.

Occasionally, some perfunctory announcements came over the loudspeaker but not really with much new information. The captain had tried to steer the ship out of the storm, to change its course in order to avoid the turbulence, but he did not succeed. Instead the powerful storm was dragging the ship along with it. That big vessel had become helpless now against the fury of Nature.

Evening came again, still with the same story. All of us on the ship were tossed about freely. Every balance of body and mind had vanished. At dinnertime I still had no appetite, so I did not eat anything. I noted that many seasoned crew members had become seriously affected by this storm, too. They were vomiting and quite ill, almost unable to function at their posts. The captain talked to me on the phone and inquired after my health, expressing concern that I would be scared and seasick. I certainly felt affected but was not swept away by fear. Emerging from my cabin very slowly and with great caution, I peeped out, almost holding my breath, to see what was happening out there. Still the same story. Then came another announcement: that the storm would not abate soon, and that, at the very least, it would continue all night long!

Again, I did not eat anything solid for supper. Instead, I kept on munching small pieces of chocolate and sucking glucose pills to keep up my energy. Sleep was simply impossible. Sitting, waiting and looking at my watch became the only way to exist! Finally, at midnight I simply collapsed on my luxurious bed, wondering how I would be able to stand another whole night of these jerking, whirling, violent movements.

While lying sleepless on the bed, I watched as my imagination found its chance and started flooding my mind with unnerving thoughts bordering on fear. I began to think about the ocean below and the situation of my little Jalamoti being assaulted mercilessly by the ruthless wind and waves. How long could she successfully withstand such a fierce, howling storm? I lay there with my life jacket on, as we had been instructed to do, and my mind started worrying about so many things. What to do if the ship fell apart, how would we manage? I was just waiting for the whistle to blow, telling us to get into the lifeboats! I remembered all those calm days of sitting on the bridge with the captain, watching the whales and other big fish go by.

Next, I began to visualize the whales and sharks, imagining what it would be like to be thrown into the water with them! The captain continued desperately attempting to steer the ship through the walls of gigantic waves. His whole concern was to prevent the sides of the ship from being blasted by the ferocious waves, for that would certainly have spelled our doom. The ship's only option was to take the huge waves head-on and to forge its way ahead, cutting right through those mighty sheets of water. I wondered which wave it would be that would finally tip the ship over completely! But only the ocean knew. I endured that terrible, long night, one of irrational imaginations and anticipation, all the while being thrown about constantly. My large bed at least kept me from being knocked completely on to the floor.

After missing so many meals, in addition to the agony of constant turbulence, I felt very weak. But, nonetheless, I had been watching how my mind became a little wild with imaginations. However, these were not entirely fanciful imaginations, since factually any of these things could have happened at any moment. All night long the storm maintained its violent momentum. I kept remembering the books I had read on the bridge about the ocean and its creatures, their mammoth sizes and great strength, especially the shark with its appetite for human flesh! Mighty sharks attack even small rafts and lifeboats. In such a turbulent ocean, they roam freely to find their food. Against their aggressive presence there is practically no defense. Along with these memories and imaginations I was also watching within myself, objectively observing all the wild thoughts passing through my mind. I could see the mind's game as it monkeyed around, projecting into the future, evoking dark, nightmarish visions and giving in to wild speculation.

I did not sleep at all that night, and nobody else on the ship slept either. We were all extremely tired, actually to the point of exhaustion. The captain still did not know how much longer the storm would continue. According to the reports, there was no end in sight. We were all reaching a breaking point – the ship as well as the people. Every violent jerk seemed like the last straw, the one that would break the back of Jalamoti. From the phone in my room I sometimes called the captain to inquire about the situation. I saw how strenuous this was for him and for all the crewmembers who were working so hard. In this very difficult time, the captain remained in charge of every decision and detail. This was no ordinary storm!

Then, around midnight, my telephone rang. I couldn't imagine a call at that hour, except in a real emergency! To get to the telephone I had to walk ten feet, which required an act of supreme determination. It was the captain calling, and he said to me very seriously, "Dada, the situation is really very bad, and we have no way of knowing if or when we will be able to come out of the storm. We are trying our best, but you must help us. Dada, it is time for you to pray for all of us."

To me that was the ultimate danger signal, an SOS coming from the captain in the middle of the dark night. I sat down on my bed, trying my best to keep my composure, awareness and inwardness. There I remained for quite some time, experiencing every pulse of the entire ship, seeing Jalamoti as a living entity like me. I experienced a sense of oneness with the whole ship and invoked a blessing for all of us. I remained almost all night with that prayerful feeling to invoke Nature's assistance.

While in this intense state, I was fully aware of the wild behavior of the storm outside, which maintained its ferocity all night. This was a truly desperate situation. The deafening sound of rain and wind created a fearsome howl. I felt alarmed by the unpredictable movements of the ship, as the fury of the storm battered her in merciless and cruel ways. Jalamoti was trying to absorb the violence of the ocean, struggling to maintain her integrity and strength. It seemed likely that at some point the ship would no longer be able to withstand this abuse, finally giving up. The whole night went on like this, with no letup or respite from the violent storm and the ocean's fury.

Morning finally came. I wanted to look outside, to know what was happening. Just getting to the porthole in my cabin was a challenge, and I had to hold on to something at every step to get there. In the dim light, I tried to peer outside. With difficulty I steadied myself to look out. Through the little window I saw no hope of relief. Again, no breakfast arrived, no desire to eat anything, and no hunger either. No announcements came, I had no news about the storm. I found that everybody was completely exhausted and paralyzed. Everyone's will and strength were thoroughly depleted by the prolonged agony.

Then, around 2:00 in the afternoon, the rain began to lose its intensity a little, yet the waves continued their devil's dance, tossing us about at their pleasure. After an hour or more, we actually began to sense a difference in the ship's movements. We could feel that we were leaving the area of the storm. The wind and rain lessened, the fury of the waves diminished. Finally, by evening the sky began to clear and the waves were much less hostile. We all rejoiced at this welcome change, and the feeling of relief was palpable. Soon followed an official announcement that we had come out of the storm and that everything was safe now. Then came time for jubilation!

To feel the calm after such a long, violent storm is a unique experience. Our hearts naturally turned toward Heaven to express gratitude for our safety. But more than that, we felt a reverence for that power which is so much greater than ourselves, for that which is higher than man!

There had been no way for us to stop during that storm. Jalamoti had to move on through it, despite the fury, danger and suffering. The ship had to sail on towards its destination, just as human life must continue through each adversity and adventure.

Finally, after 38 days of eventful life at sea we reached Taiwan. Again we had two full days to walk on solid earth! What a delightful experience to stand on stable, non-moving ground. I enjoyed that walk immensely. Jalamoti had to be repaired and replenished with food, water and other necessities. The next part of the voyage would be even longer – all the way across the Pacific Ocean to the shores of America.

The shipping line's local agent for Taiwan came out to see me, having heard that the ship had a VIP passenger in the owner's cabin. He brought me flowers, fruit and sweets from Taiwan, and he asked me about my experience during the storm. I told him it was harrowing, but that now I could look back on it and feel good because we went through it successfully. The storm had served to show me once again how man takes life for granted and continues within the framework of environmental influences. He is pushed and tossed and kicked by the currents of surrounding life forces without knowing how and why he lands in various situations which are sometimes pleasant and at other times painful.

The mind's various attachments are the cause of misery and sorrow in life. Man remains totally unaware of the Cosmic Intelligence – the will of the elemental energy of Life. Not knowing its beginning or its end, he walks through the vast cosmic creation. Life is a journey of the unknowable, unpredictable vital force marching from the beginningless towards the endless.

Thus, the storm taught me a great deal about life. I told the agent that I would surely remember that rattling experience for a lifetime!

The halt in Taiwan proved a lucky break after our nightmare at sea. Celebration was in the air that day which happened to be a national holiday, The local people were all out in the streets merrymaking and Taiwan wore a festive look. I went downtown and walked the whole time, enjoying the colorful sights and the mood of gaiety. Meanwhile, the crew had to inspect the entire ship, looking for any evidence of storm damage. The ship as well as everyone aboard needed this time to replenish and refresh themselves.

We were relieved and thankful, yet eager to begin the next leg of our voyage. Now, with new vigor, we set out for an even longer journey, as the entire Pacific Ocean lay ahead of us. This would be the longest and most continuous leg of the trip, facing that whole distance with no place to halt on the way, until we reached North America. It would be a period of three weeks with nothing in sight except the fathomless ocean and the wide expanse of sky overhead.

As I watched the seascape, it suddenly occurred to me that the human eye is generally comfortable focusing on a stable object, which serves as a resting point. It feels rather lost when faced by the prospect of a vacant scene with nothing specific to fix its gaze upon. This, in turn, makes the mind restless. No wonder many a sailor becomes affected by the monotony of such a long, uneventful journey.

When we left Taiwan, I felt optimistic and anticipated with faith this long journey without a single stop. Although there were chances of storms in this region also, no one could know exactly what lay ahead. No storms were forecast such as the one we had endured just days earlier, but we could not be certain what waited out there in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Facing three weeks more of constant movement and unpredictable weather presented another challenge. We had no choice but to move on until we reached our final destination – America.

Surprisingly, those three weeks went by without much difficulty. Every other day, the time advanced by half an hour, as we were moving directly to the east. The times for eating and sleeping kept changing, and the body clock had to adjust to those changes. The ship rolled constantly day and night, without any respite. Still I spent my time mostly alone on the monkey deck, savoring the solitude and the vastness, the silence and peace, feeling a new centeredness that grew with inwardness. I faced the prospect of America with acceptance and an adventurous spirit, high atop my ocean pearl.

After a long voyage of exactly sixty days in all, Jalamoti finally neared the shores of California. This joyous occasion to land once again after such a long and arduous journey brought us all out on deck. We entered the Bay as our ship very proudly and happily moved under the famous Golden Gate Bridge. The panoramic sight of the city of San Francisco stood clear before us on that bright and sunny day. Her majesty, beauty and freshness touched our expectant hearts. My dream of a journey to America was materializing right before my eyes!

Finally, Life had brought me safely to this unknown land. I did not know what awaited me there, yet the unknown had always posed a challenge to me. Coming to this foreign country, where I did not have a single friend, not even a person that I knew, would now be my new adventure. Why had Life brought me to this place? Would I actually be able to stay in this country for a while, or would I have to go back on this very ship when it returned to India in a few days? All these thoughts passed quickly through my mind as we entered the famous harbor. Yet, more strong than these fleeting thoughts, existed the growing conviction that the intelligence of this new energy, now rooted and active in me, would somehow – mysteriously and appropriately – guide my steps on this new shore.

Living is a flow of unknown events;
Every situation is new and uncertain.

To acknowledge this uncertainty of Life
And to accept it with total abandonment
Is to live in surrender and faith.

THIRTEEN

ARRIVAL IN AMERICA

Unfolding of the Spirit

All the crew members changed from their usual work uniforms to civilian clothes, obviously quite ready to disembark and spend a few leisurely days on shore after their strenuous work on board. I, too, waited happily on deck, ready with my single suitcase and small cloth bag slung across my shoulder.

As the ship laid down anchor, my eyes eagerly searched to find someone with a beard who was around 35 years of age. This was the only information Dr. Rao had given me about Mr. Ken Reed, the only way to recognize my American contact person! Cargo vessels have no regular schedule for arrivals, and rarely any passengers, so only a few people waited at the berth to receive our ship. In a short time my search for a bearded youngish face ended, as I found nobody there to meet me.

Somewhat dejected and nervous, I stood with my suitcase and bag wondering what to do next. Just then the ship's purser came over to inquire about my disembarking plans. I told him that I had expected my American host to come to receive me, but that he was not there yet. Seeing my dilemma the purser said, "Arrival times of cargo ships are never fixed and punctual, so this Ken Reed could reach here anytime during the day. Take it easy and rest in your cabin. When he comes, he will be directed to my office. I will contact you immediately."

The purser's advice consoled me greatly. After waiting a while longer, I returned to my cabin to contemplate this perplexing situation. Although shaken up a bit by this unexpected event, I looked with interest into myself objectively to find out how I was responding. It was a cause for some concern, yet I knew that patience would be necessary. After a small lunch and quiet afternoon, still no one had showed up for me.

The purser came again and informed me that the ship would be in the harbor for three more days. Since there was no urgency to leave, he said I should take the situation calmly and be comfortable on the ship. If not today, my contact person would surely come tomorrow or even the next day, he felt. According to the original travel plan, our ship should have reached San Francisco within 45 to 50 days, but instead it took us a full 60 days to arrive. The purser commented that it is generally difficult for anyone to come to pick up a passenger on exactly the day of arrival.

This was comforting information, so again I relaxed and later, in the evening, went up to the monkey deck to watch the evening sky as dusk fell over the city. I gazed at the amazingly beautiful scene, observing the whole panorama of city lights from atop my perch. The tall buildings, all of different heights and shapes, became jagged silhouettes against the charcoal blue evening sky. It seemed like a huge city, with other towns all around in the distance. A chill penetrated me atop the monkey deck, and the wind felt almost like rain. I could hear the traffic noises of what sounded like a million cars, with some occasional honking. San Francisco was as if electrified, with lights of every color illuminating the sky.

While sitting there with this wondrous view before me, I suddenly realized that this very day was my birthday, September 4. Life had brought me here to celebrate it. Instead of sweets and good wishes as usual on one's birthday, I was wearing a garland of uncertainty and concern, yet was surrounded with beauty and the new. Life in reality is a mysterious, unpredictable momentum, which I had felt and experienced often. That day I found it difficult to comprehend what was hiding in this bewildering crisis-like situation on a foreign seashore.

Morning came and I awoke to find the ship enveloped in a dense fog. The glittering city of last night had almost disappeared. As usual I took my breakfast, bathed and dressed quickly, wanting to discover that someone named Ken Reed had arrived for me. Again it did not happen, even on that second day.

The third day was a critical time since the ship had to sail the following day to Vancouver, Canada. I could not go along with the ship because I carried no Canadian visa.

The San Francisco agent of Scindia Steam Company learned about my predicament from the purser. He came to meet me and very kindly took me down to his office on shore. I told him about my only contact in America. The agent suggested that we look for his name and address in the telephone directory for Los Angeles, which seemed like a good idea. But when he opened the fat telephone directory, we got a real shock seeing three full pages of tiny print with hundreds of names – Ken Reed, Kenneth Reed, K. Read and variations. How to know which Ken was my man?

At random the agent began to pick out names and started dialing them one by one. He sincerely wanted to help me find my contact. We only knew that he was about 35, sporting a beard and running a bookshop of religious and philosophical books in Los Angeles. The agent called at least 15 numbers, talking to each person who answered to find out if he fit the criteria. But when he did not find the right one after many calls, he reluctantly came to the end of his enthusiastic search. He finally had to give it up as too time-consuming.

Meanwhile the agent's wife waited in the office for him. She had been watching and listening to the whole drama. Finally she came over, introduced herself to me, and started asking a few more questions. Then she suggested that she, too, would like to call more people in hope of finding the right person. She made some calls, but again totally in vain. We sat around late into the evening chatting and anxiously pondering over our next move.

I casually mentioned to them that I carried a lifetime membership card of the Hare Krishna Society. This group has temples in various U.S. cities, and I knew that they had a big temple in San Francisco. I suggested that I could go there until I got news of Ken Reed. They immediately accepted the idea rather than see me return to India right away. His wife knew about this temple, and she offered to drive me there the next morning. I returned to Jalamoti for a still uncertain last night on board my ocean pearl.

According to plan, the agent's wife took me to the nearby Hare Krishna temple. She asked me why I was a member of this group, since I was not affiliated to any organized religion or society. I told her that I had met the head of the Hare Krishna foundation, Sheela Prabhupada, and he had presented me with a lifetime membership card. This card permits the member to stay at the temple free for a few days. Shree Sheela Prabhupada also had been given a complementary ticket similar to mine to travel on one of the cargo ships of Scindia Steam Navigation Company. He, too, had come to the U.S. without knowing anyone in America. And he told me that maybe the card would be useful to me, knowing that things can be unpredictable in a foreign country.

The agent's wife called ahead at the temple and explained about me and what I needed. When we arrived, they received me graciously, knowing that I had just come from India. She also told them of my predicament with the missing Ken Reed. They offered lodging for as long as I needed in order to find him. The agent's wife felt relieved and pleased with my reception, so she left me with them. I thanked her, expressing my appreciation for all that she had done in going out of her way to get me there safely. She assured me that I could call her at any time if need be.

My single room in the temple had a small bed with a colorful Indian-designed bed sheet. The room was simple, with only a few items as decoration but neatly arranged, giving the feeling of religiousness and austerity. I lay down and rested in a relaxed mood, contemplating this perplexing situation. I still remember that moment vividly. Instead of worrying and trying to plan anything, I was looking into myself at how I continued to respond to this crisis-like situation. I was apprehensive and concerned, but not scared. A faith somewhere deep down in me mysteriously kept me stable in this critical situation.

The temple planned a prasadam in my honor. This special food is given as an offering to God to invoke his blessing. Again quite different food from what I had been eating on the ship, this was prepared in pure ghee, which is refined butter, along with milk, nuts and vegetables. I gratefully thanked them for their sincerely happy reception and settled down in my room, wondering what to do next about Ken Reed.

I stayed in the temple for seven or eight days, not leaving the compound even to see the famous city of San Francisco. I had no one to contact in this vast country except Mr. Reed, so it was a very tense time. The temple people said I could use the telephone, and they offered to help me with this. So occasionally I tried to call a few numbers in Los Angeles, but still all in vain. I was getting concerned as the days passed, and wondered if he would ever be found.

In such a state of heightened pondering, when the whole life-energy gets involved in any problem or issue without getting disturbed, pushed or pulled by any negative or positive thoughts or ideas, mysteriously solutions spring from within in a flash. This is an act of the unknown. One day, instinctively, I just walked towards the telephone table and leafing through the directory, I randomly picked up two particular numbers. Unlike other times, now I had a strong urge and mysterious feeling about these two numbers. I became excited and just flew toward the telephone table, dialing hurriedly. On the very first number, the right Ken Reed was on the other side! I asked him if he owned a bookstore, and he said yes. And if he had a friend Mr. J. Rao in Mumbai, and he said yes again! I had finally found him! This gave me such a thrill of relief, except that he lived far away in Los Angeles.

I told him I had thought he would be in San Francisco when I arrived. Ken explained that Mr. Rao wrote to him about my coming, but that correspondence was a long time ago. Mr. Rao never gave a specific date for my arrival. Everything had been uncertain and then further complicated because the voyage took 60 days instead of the usual 45.

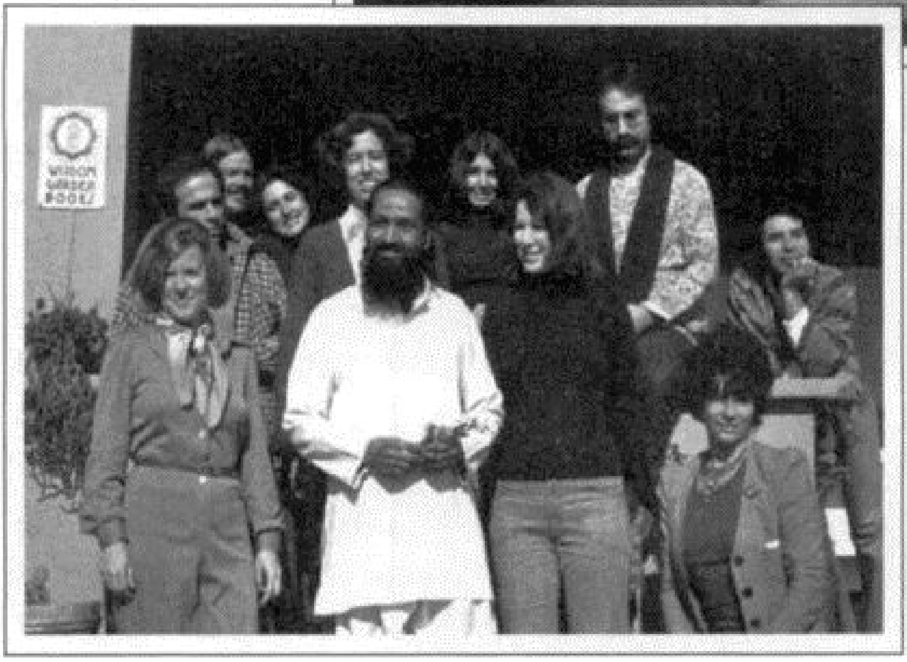
This elusive Mr. Ken Reed sounded truly happy that I had arrived. He said he was eager to come up to San Francisco to get me, and that he would be there in just a couple of days. Accordingly he headed north to pick me up. I was so happy to meet my first American friend! It was my day of deliverance.

I was very grateful to the Hare Krishna temple for offering me free lodging at the time when I had no one to turn to in this foreign land and could hardly afford hotel accommodation. I thanked the Sannyasis for their kind hospitality and generous help.

We drove to Los Angeles in his little sports car in what seemed like a long journey, some 500 Kms or so. Compared to my slow, rolling Jalamoti, this incredible fast pace dazed me as we whizzed along the freeway. What a very

Ken Reed (far left) and friends: my first group of young seekers

First Christmas Day talk in 1975


WISDOM GARDEN BOOKS

With some seekers and helpers in Los Angeles.

different experience, to be on a superhighway in a racecar!

During the long drive of 7 or 8 hours, Ken came up with many questions. He asked about the voyage, my food, everything that his inquiring mind needed to know about his Indian visitor. To my surprise I found it fairly easy to talk with him. He had been to India, and he understood my way of speaking English. Also he spoke a little more distinctly so that I could recognize the words better.

Thus I started to understand the American accent through him. Most Americans in San Francisco talked so fast! They jumbled everything together, and I found it very hard to understand them. Sometimes I missed whole sentences just because people talked so much faster than I could comprehend. But Ken Reed was very considerate about this, and we began to converse easily. He took me to his house to stay with him, and I also visited his bookshop. He specialized in books on Indian spirituality, meditation, yoga, etc. He knew many young people in town and had several friends and customers who were interested in these subjects.

We used to talk frequently in the evening after he came home from work. Gradually, he became genuinely intrigued by what I was saying. He asked a lot about my experiences of solitude and the new energy. Soon he got the idea of inviting some of his friends and bookstore customers over to his house to meet me. He said I would only need to talk a little bit and then they could ask me a few questions.

This intimidated me in the beginning, but I was slowly getting more confident with my English. By then I had also started understanding American English somewhat better, so I finally agreed to meet a few of his friends. This rustic hermit from the jungle of Mahableshwar suddenly found himself in dialogue with sophisticated westerners in Los Angeles. I did not plan what I would be saying to these friends. During my long stay in the forests of Mahableshwar, I had given up thinking and planning, because there was nothing much to think about and I had no definite tasks to perform. I used to do things according to the need of the moment and this had almost become my way of life. So for the group discussions in America too, I relied on this capacity of saying whatever would be the outcome of the moment. As I had no set philosophy, I was not sure about my ideas, and I was not so comfortable in the

English language either. The only confidence I had was that the inner spirit had its own way of unfolding and communicating itself.

Ken was enthusiastic about these meetings. He said that I was making very meaningful observations and useful points during the dialogues. He even suggested that these discussions be tape-recorded. However, I was hesitant to allow the tape-recording, as I was still not sure whether I was coherent and also whether I was being understood clearly in view of my foreign accent and lack of practice in using the English language. But a few days later, when three of his friends dropped in for dialogue, he secretly recorded the conversation.

Then after a week or so, Ken came up to me rather sheepishly one evening and said that he had a confession to make. I asked with concern "What is it that is bothering you? Have you wronged someone?" His reply puzzled me completely for he insisted that it was me he had wronged and would I forgive him. He went on to tell me that he had recorded my discussion with the visitors without my permission. He described how he had hidden the microphone under the carpet close to where I sat the other day while conversing with his friends. He had kept the tape-recorder in the adjoining room so that I would not notice it. He said apologetically "Dada, I just could not resist recording the conversation as I sincerely feel these dialogues will be of great help to seekers, especially those who may never get a chance to meet you. Please forgive me". "That's quite alright," I said and added, "now that you have recorded my voice I might as well listen to it!"

Curious to know how I sounded, I listened to the recording and was pleasantly surprised – whatever I had said did make a lot of sense! This helped increase my confidence. I thanked Ken for what he had done and assured him that I had nothing to forgive him for. I even granted him permission to record our next group discussion.

Little did I know then that this was just the beginning of a very long and fruitful association with America!

FOURTEEN

THE PSYCHOLOGISTS: MY FIRST CHALLENGE

Mind: a Limited Mechanism

In the beginning, it was only through Ken Reed that I met with individuals or a couple of people together in America. They would then tell others about their conversations with me. Word spread quickly and more seekers started calling for meetings and dialogues. A local reporter for 'Los Angeles Times', a very popular and prestigious newspaper, came to do an interview, and he wrote a comprehensive article including my large-size photograph. That gave more publicity and prompted numerous phone calls.

Most of the visitors who came appeared young, in their 20s or 30s. They showed a lot of enthusiasm to take in what I expressed. A group of young psychologists working on their PhDs. heard about me, and they requested to have discussions. The mind being their specialty, they became intrigued by this Indian man saying something quite different about it. Gradually they started to visit a lot, sincerely questioning and pondering what I was describing.

They asked me, "What kind of understanding comes from beyond the mind? How can that be?" Some of them argued strongly that there cannot be any intelligence apart from the mind.

Most people believe that the mind is the only possible instrument for thinking and understanding. They are convinced that the logical mind is our greatest asset, and that without the mind a human being would just be like an animal. To most psychologists, intelligence is a function of genes or the outcome of the brain. To them there is only mental and physical energy, so my talk of a new-dimensional energy made no sense to them.

I had to be patient with those young psychologists, because indeed this has been an unknown aspect to most intellectuals. I asked them to be a little more open to see what I was communicating and what I had experienced myself. Psychologists generally want something measurable that fits into an established psychological theory. It was important to share with them about the existence of understanding and intelligence apart from the brain – that there is a pure, natural and unfragmented energy that lies beyond the realm of thought-mind.

Speaking to a group of psychologists in San Francisco

I pointed out that the mind has its own system of memory, rationality and logic, with its capacity and ability to draw conclusions. In that way the mind is a helpful instrument to use in the activities of daily living. But on the other hand this instrument also has some serious limitations.

I asked them to pay a little more attention to the limitations of this instrument. It is necessary to observe how the mind holds on tightly to an idea, chatters endlessly in irrelevant memories of the bygone past, and fantasizes about the future; to see how it draws wrong conclusions and makes invalid assumptions; notice how the mind is caught up in a groove, being influenced by the surroundings and society; see how strongly the environmental influences shape it.

I urged them to watch how the mind thinks and draws conclusions according to its own wishful leanings and conditionings. But those conclusions are not necessarily the realities of life. If you are educated in Russia, your conclusions will be of one kind. If you are born somewhere else, it will be different. One may be an intelligent person, but he or she at every level will be a product of the culture and environment.

Basically the mind is an instrument born out of genetic, educational, social, economic, cultural and political factors. A mind can be clever and highly informed, but can such a mind ever know the reality of life, the truth of it, even basic right and wrong? A conditioned psychological instrument will never be able to see the truth of any issue in life. It will see only what it has been taught to see.

I asked them to remember that the mind's conclusions are not the truth. Each mind comprehends solely through its conditioned window on the world. When the thought process can be completely freed from cultural and political philosophies, from all environmental influences, then one can remain balanced and objective to comprehend reality fully, as it is.

The urgent need is to discover such an uninfluenced apparatus. Otherwise, even in trying to solve problems, we are again going to create more problems, more divisions, more quarrels, wars and more crises. Even the religions and religious philosophies, because of their strong conditioning, have started many wars and brought untold suffering to humanity. So conditioning of any kind, be it political, social or religious, renders the mind incapable of being objective. Such a conditioned mind is not capable of bringing about inner or outer peace.

The psychologists talked about how science is learning much more about conditioning, how early it begins, how strong it is – all the genetic factors. It is alright, I would say, that the researchers are delving into this, but we need to have a new look at this very mind that we ourselves have. Each of us needs to make an impartial investigation into this complex instrument. It is not enough just to let the experts do their psychological experiments and genetic research in the labs. We need to see inside ourselves. See the thought-mind, feel its chattering, see its patterns and domination, observe the conditioning and its blind spots; every minute.

We really do not know much about our own mind because we have taken it for granted. It is used according to learned habit patterns and in order to fulfill our wishful goals. We draw convenient conclusions based on the colored vision of the apparatus. All plans, conclusions and opinions spring from this rigidly programmed mechanism. Then we stick to our conclusions and assumptions as if they were true. And this is what the educated mind is doing.

"Are you happy with this mental dogmatism?" I asked. This was my line of discussion with them. I encouraged them to look into the mind with a new spirit, in an open way, without taking it for granted or glorifying it.

"Since we are born with this tool, we think it is a complete and final instrument. Now it is time to see how incomplete it is. We have to recognize that the mind, as it is structured, is not the appropriate mechanism for living in the world of complex relationships. It is especially not the right means for psychological or spiritual understanding.

"The educated man is the result of his choices, his conclusions and his personal experiences. But what is his actual life today? Many have succeeded in building an image according to their expectations. They may become successful in business, sports, politics, etc., yet are they happy, peaceful and loving? Has man overcome his anger, fears, anxieties and frictions with his fellow human beings, even in this affluent society? Why is this mind never content? Isn't it necessary to take an honest and objective look at this mental mechanism, to observe its primitive and delusive nature, its clever and cunning self-centered activity? Will you ever be truly peaceful and happy with the kind of thinking instrument that exists within you?"

They would argue with me and say that much research is being done in the fields of counseling, education and psychology to teach us about relationship, right living, and how to get along. But I would confront them, "How much do you actually know about your own mind? Let us not talk about theories and research by experts. Just look inside yourself. You may occasionally see some desires, dreams, angers and reactions, your usual habit patterns and some fleeting thoughts. But that is only one aspect of the mind on a very superficial level. Is it enough to stay on that superficial level?

"How are you going to discover the hidden, unknown part of yourself? That hidden part of the mind is manipulating and controlling your life, all your actions and character, your likes and dislikes, your desires and dreams. You are unaware of this dictator which is inside you!

"You will have to bring about a qualitative, radical change in the whole field of the thinking mechanism, not just make repeated modifications and take sedatives to keep it in line. It is necessary to bring about a total change, a basic revolution in this very apparatus itself."

Then they would defend the mind, almost attacking the possibility or necessity of such a profound change. To them the mind is the main force of life, and the process of thinking is a natural activity. These psychologists were verbally aggressive, saying that without the thinking mechanism man would be dumb or crazy. How can you have a revolution in this apparatus, they would demand.

Time and again I told them, "The way of understanding and awakening is through a constant vigilance into oneself. Such watchful attention within, at every moment, is going to generate an impersonal and objective sensitivity. Ultimately, this can take a man beyond the frontiers of mind and into the universal dimension of Life."

Talking about 'beyond' and 'universal' was almost too much for these educated men and women. But they gradually became interested. They had to acknowledge that throughout the history of psychology and religion the existence of a higher self has been consistently discussed. But what exactly is this, they wondered, recognizing that there are many different theories about it and few have experienced it first-hand.

I said that humanity on earth stands poised today to receive the beauty and mystery of a new-dimensional existence. The discovery of this new Life force is the only real challenge for the modern educated individual. This alone will bring peace and happiness to man and to his entire race on earth.

The ultimate challenge for a human being is he himself, his psychological 'I'. By dissolving the psychological entity – in losing himself, his 'I-ness' – man stands to gain the greatest prize of life: freedom. In this challenge lies the opportunity for a human being to discover his hidden spiritual potential. *Freedom from the conditioned mind is the liberation of life*. In freedom alone lies the chance for creativity, newness and originality.

These assertions were certainly new to those PhD students and teachers of psychology. They dealt with ideas and analyzed emotions. Their only interest lay in minor modifications of the conditioned mind as it relates to behavior, motives, habits, etc. without giving up their set theories and beliefs. Their understanding of the mind was based on knowledge and information collected from textbooks, authors, psychologists, researchers or other thinkers who preceded them and proposed new or refined theories of psychology.

Such understanding is academic and based mainly on conclusions drawn by other people. Even if the conclusions are one's own, they are limited, circumstantial, speculative and biased, and therefore are about as good as probing in the dark. Theoretical knowledge prevents scholars from having real understanding of the working of one's mind and the direct experience of the whole energy unit within oneself.

A learned man is like a water tap
Drawing water from the reservoir of knowledge.
He will never be a stream
That flows with the natural, fresh
Water of Life.

The mind mechanism has to be observed and experienced first-hand in its entirety if we wish to understand it. Even psychologists are not aware of such personal understanding through a direct experiencing of the mind. Different experts chalk out their own theories. We read them, accept them, and thus our understanding of this apparatus operating within us remains superficial and second-hand.

The question is, will theories lead to the truth, the wisdom of Life? Isn't the truth a matter of personal experience born out of objective investigation? I inquired of them, "Are you capable of having totally unbiased perception? Do you have an influence-free, transparent mind?

"Now you are working only with established theories, filtered by your conditioned mind. But this is a second-hand approach, based on memory. You must have first-hand experience and understanding in order to make this profound change."

Not one of them could say that they had looked at their mind objectively, or knew very much about it first-hand. When psychologists talk about personal change, transformation, spiritual growth, and self-understanding, do they have any real, first-hand experience of what they are saying? Do they know what it is to understand the thinking mechanism intimately, to see the apparatus in its entirety?

Their effort is to change thought patterns, to modify negative behavior, to alter things somewhat with drugs, which have recently become a convenient remedy. Even spiritual search is viewed within this same realm of the electrochemical/biological mind. Self-realization is seen as only a loftier version of the same regular pursuits. But I would say to them that true transformation, that other dimensional change, involves much more than lofty ideas and minor modifications.

Mysteriously, the human mind has an inherent capacity to transform itself fundamentally, at its very root. It has an astonishing ability to bring about a radical revolution in the core of one's own being. At any level of biological conditioning – that is the way we are genetically made, plus at the level of our social conditioning – there appears to be a unique space or opportunity for radical change. This is like a quantum leap, a different order of magnitude or dimension, involving a new energy that is unlike anything we have ever experienced.

Every biological situation has its etheric counterpart. We have not only the physical frame, but along with that frame there are other subtle bodies, an astral or etheric material which is a counterpart to the visible, but is itself unseen. We can influence these subtle bodies only with our own sensitivity. Techniques, hope, ambition, thoughts or desires of the mind are crude ways and mostly hindrances. By affecting this subtle etheric counterpart through sensitivity, awareness and meditation, it is possible to bring about a change in the physical body, as well as on the cellular level, including in the brain itself.

The existence of an aura or a subtle etheric aspect of man has been almost hidden and untouched in most literature, whether religious, psychological or scientific. Only now is it coming into some recognition. But that which is unseen and immeasurable does exist and is a real and invaluable aspect of Life.

Scientists are starting to talk about the existence of an unknown, immeasurable energy that is the flip side or counterpart of the material world. Science and religion are in their own ways exploring some of the most mysterious and fundamental aspects of Life, call them sub-atomic, cosmic or divine.

So, this subtle etheric counterpart can be influenced or affected, and this in turn affects our primitive thought-mind activity. Awareness and watchfulness in every moment are the means to see within, to bring about a new quality of silence in the inner domain. *Meditative quietude is an invitation to change, because only in that total silence can the mind energy be transformed.* Total quietude is a state of integrated, balanced energy. Silence is the catalyst for radical change.

That state of balance and quietude has a mysterious intrinsic quality of renewal. It can repair any damage, any genetic abnormality or imbalance. Self-repair is always possible in the human mind, at a level that we are only beginning to touch upon. Regeneration, mutation and transformation are possible. These effects of this energy are some of its hidden blessings. They are available for the human being, but the scientists and psychologists don't fully recognize this yet.

Only the silent touch of total Life energy can bring about a miraculous change in the health, psyche and heart. The whole being becomes transformed. So why are we conducting ourselves so ignorantly when such wonderful possibilities are available for this incredible, elemental change?

Such a radical dimensional change is possible, but only with the help of total Life energy. We do not yet know what that energy is. Now the mind is using only a part of that energy, fragmenting it into ideas and thoughts. The conceptual thought process is not able to help much to bring about this quantum leap. It is in fact a hindrance.

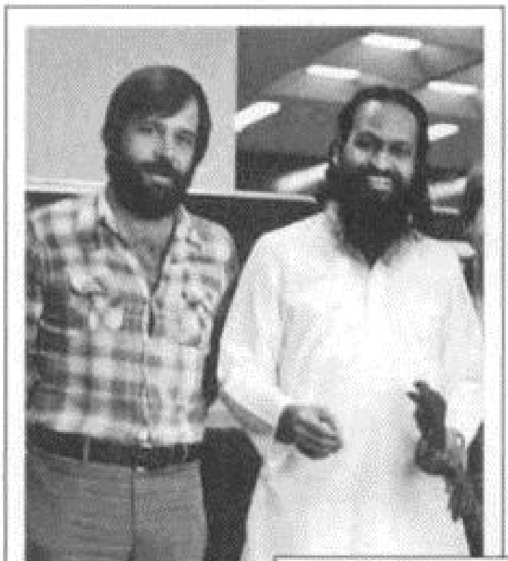
So the real problem is that the energy is scattered through thought. This causes friction and many problems in life. Is it possible to bring about wholeness in this fragmented energy? Can we keep it pure, integrated, without dissipating it outwardly? Then we will see the beauty of the wholeness of energy. This itself becomes the holy spirit of Life. The transparent whole energy can give the touch of cosmic compassion. It can heal any emotional or psychological damage or abnormality.

This blessing is available to mankind at any time. When one feels the urgent need for it, then it is possible. It will be available in abundance. Only the right approach, intense sensitivity and a deep sense of urgency are important. Thought-mind is not the right instrument to touch that benevolent Life energy. One's own tranquil energy, silently residing in the inner domain, is the instrument which can bring one in touch with that which is greater, unseen, mysterious, divine. The only challenge for a civilized, intelligent human being is to discover this silent, timeless benevolence.

When Creation touches your core,
Profound peace abides in you,
Heavenly stars smile on you,
Cosmic Intelligence whispers through you.

Those psychologists were slowly beginning to be aware of the mind-thought process and how limited it is. We inquired together about the mind and the possibility of what is beyond it. Our discussions went on in this way, in both individual meetings and groups. The psychologists began to soften their stance, to be open and to inquire, to look within.

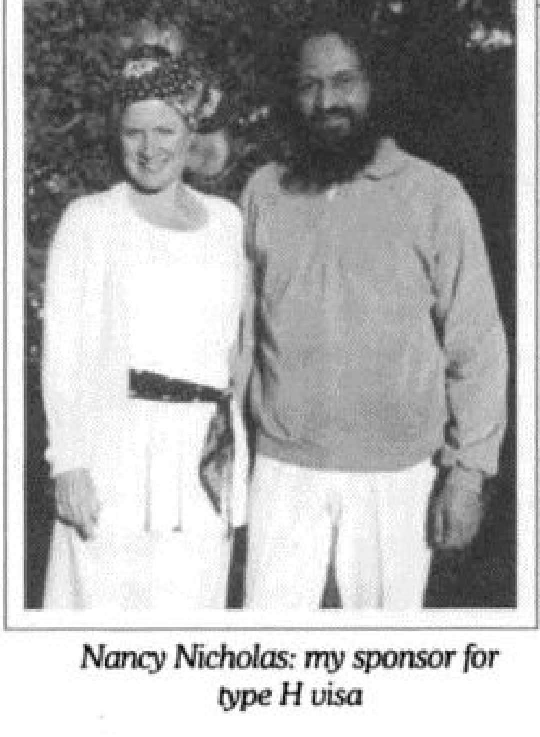
At that time in California around 1975, there were not many ashrams or spiritual teachers. Talks about awareness, watchfulness and meditation were fairly new. I spent three months in Los Angeles meeting with many people. Ken Reed took me around to visit his friends, and ultimately I ended up staying with various people in Southern California. Many of them were psychologists and professionals. At each place we had intense discussions, very lively and heated at times.



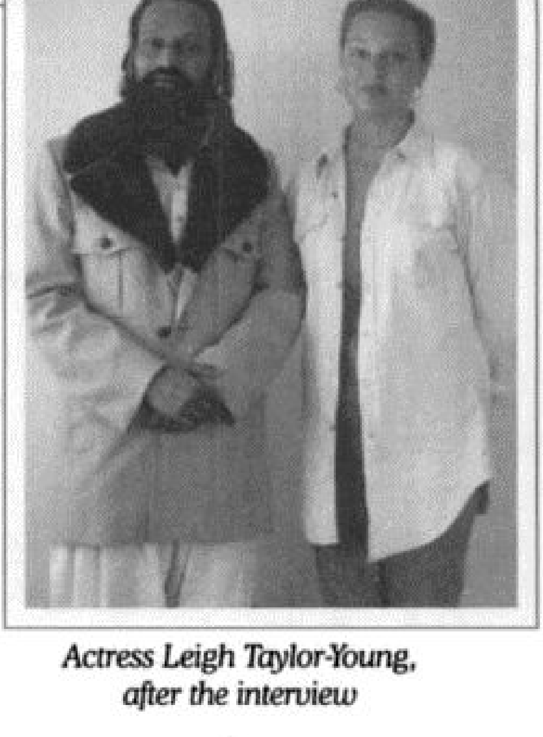
My host Ken Reed

My friends Markell Brooks and Jean Allen

With Dr. Helen Wright



Nancy Nicholas: my sponsor for type H visa



Actress Leigh Taylor-Young, after the interview

While in the Los Angeles area I also met some film actresses and directors from Hollywood. They would come to talk to me about awareness and spiritual inquiry. Many of these sensitive and inquiring people have remained lifelong friends. What an incredible first three months in America, meeting psychologists and business owners, actors, directors – such a variety of people.

All showed keen interest in hearing about a new spiritual dimension in which man would be free from the mechanical mind.

At the end of three months, my tourist visa was about to expire. I had arrived not knowing anyone, wondering what I would do in this strange new land. Amazingly, the time had passed so quickly, and my days had been full with new people, experiences and challenges. But soon I would have to leave the United States. We inquired and found out that another ship would be available to take me back to India. When my friends and the psychologists heard of this impending situation, they insisted strongly that I should stay longer. They enquired and found out how to apply to the Immigration and Naturalization Service to extend my visa.

I was not sure about staying, but I could see that people were open and receptive. Therefore I finally decided to remain longer. Somehow a sponsor came forward, a wealthy woman named Nancy Nicholas who had attended one of my talks. She offered to be financially responsible for my continued stay in the U.S. Four Doctors of Psychology took the initiative to apply to the immigration office and do the necessary paperwork for me to stay, including letters from a medical and psychological research institution about my importance in this country. So I got a new visa, known as type H, for people of 'exceptional abilities' and 'extraordinary originality.' The visa was good for up to one year and renewable for three years. No longer a tourist, I saw that I would not be returning to India very soon.

FIFTEEN

YOGA:
A FRESH LOOK

Integrating the Fragmented Energy

After staying a while longer in the Los Angeles area, I traveled north back to San Francisco, my starting point in America. I had received numerous invitations to visit various places and groups all around the Bay Area. Many letters came from yoga teachers who had heard about me from the psychologists with whom I held discussions in Los Angeles. I was happy to meet with these yoga teachers since they showed keen interest in fundamental change.

During the ensuing months I stayed with many different individuals and gave group talks in private homes as well as in public places. My primary host was Robert Carr, who had a large home in the beautiful town of Woodacre. The house was rustic yet lovely, surrounded by mighty redwood trees, some of them so old that they must have been the contemporaries of Buddha and Christ. We held a few group meetings there, and he invited a variety of interesting people including doctors, artists and yoga teachers. This group of professionals showed much openness to what I had to say.

Some of them later organized a three-day seminar at Wilbur Hot Springs, a scenic retreat north of San Francisco. Located in the hills near natural sulfur hot springs, its quiet proved conducive to introspection. About forty people came, mostly yoga teachers, plus people practicing meditation and yoga. It was a nice gathering of young people, each in his own way working enthusiastically toward spiritual progress. In this three-day seminar I gave one talk each day in the morning. The rest of the time was filled with yoga practices, discussions and sessions for meditation.

My main topic dealt with coming into the present by getting free of the past, and how yoga can be related to some aspects of spiritual awakening. We started by talking about how we are generally bound by the past through our memories as well as by our cultural and psychological conditioning. I asked them to be aware of how we are living in the past or the future all the time, how the mind is nothing but a storehouse of memories and information. We could say the mind is a structure created by the past. All that we have known and experienced is stored in the brain as memory, which is the driving force of the mind. The challenge of spiritual understanding lies in freedom from this storehouse of the past.

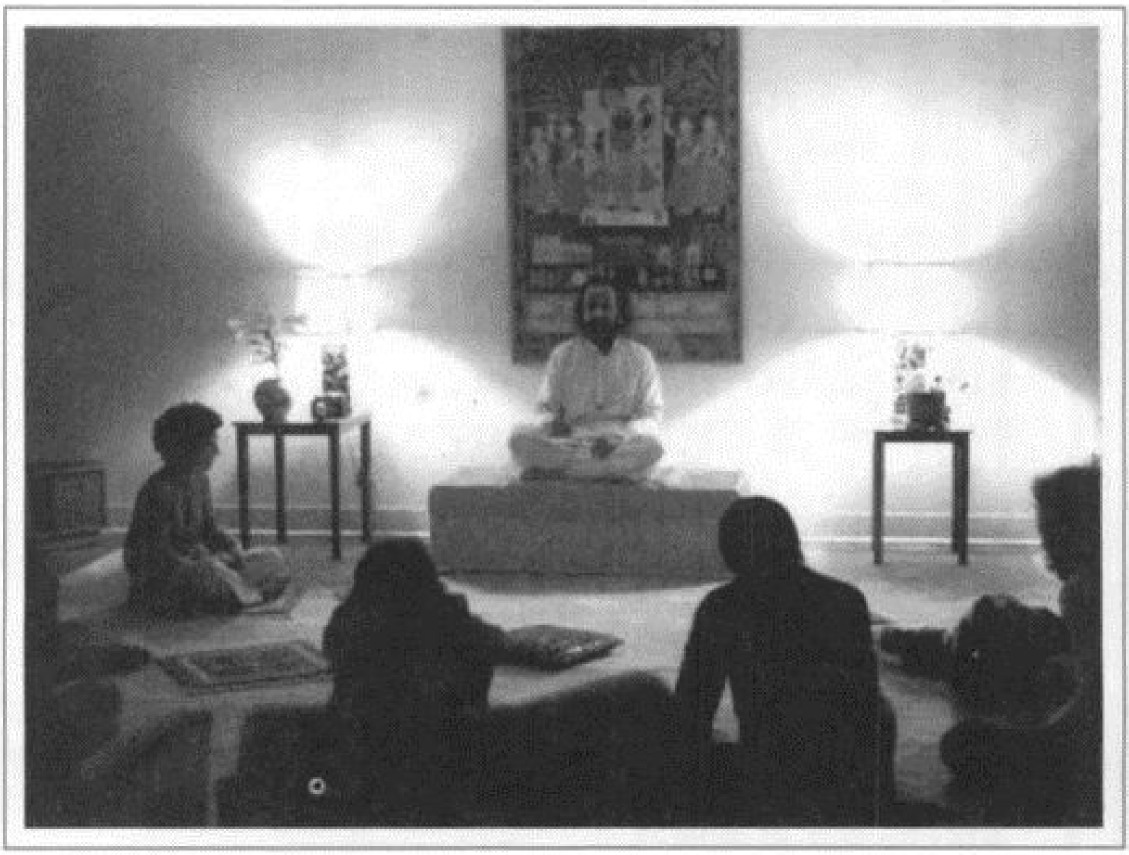
Yogic practices came into being specifically to bring about freedom from the thought process. The history of yoga is clear on this point.

Some of the exercises of 'pranayama' or breathing techniques, and 'asanas' or yogic postures do help us to slow down and detach ourselves from the ever-active mind. Inhaling, exhaling and kumbhak or holding the breath can indeed quiet the hectic activity of the mind and body to a certain extent. They help us to maintain our health and to calm ourselves during practice.

But I pointed out to them that yoga exercises alone are not going to silence the complex mind enough to help a person attain the full freedom of Life energy. Yoga exercises are only the first step, a right beginning in the direction but not a total package. They are not an end, nor will they bring liberation. There is so much more to understand about the whole phenomenon of Life. I urged them not to stop with yoga practice, but to see it as a useful tool in some ways. One has to recognize that the real challenge of change lies farther ahead. *Yoga exercises and pranayama are only ways to stabilize the body and mind for some time.*

However, it is not enough just to calm oneself for a while. The need is to go totally beyond the mind in order to discover the new-dimensional energy, which is the true spirit of Life. One has to take a deep plunge into this complex and contradictory mechanism of mind itself.

Vigilance and intense awareness, inside and outside, begin where the yogic practice ends. I suggested that they not be contented with yogic postures alone, not become complacent just doing breathing and other exercises. There is a need to take a deeper look, which is to understand and experience this



A talk in the house of Markell Brooks in Los Angeles

Wilbur Hot Springs
SINCE 1865
private

Wilbur Hot Springs Seminar for yoga teachers in California mind/ego, the thinker of thoughts, the producer of emotions, the desirer of various pursuits, and creator of illusions.

These few verses that I composed capture the essence of what I discussed in those three days of seminars:

What is Yoga? Yoga means union.
We interpret that word in many different ways:
A union between mind and body,
Between lower and higher self.

We view yoga as a means to union with God,
But this union is not with anything.
That is only a convenient interpretation
By our wishful, clever thought-mind.

I doubt if there could be any such thing as a union
Between the lower self and the higher one!
Can lower and higher ever unite?
Do darkness and light ever meet?

Yoga simply means union--
A union of Life force,
Union and integration of energy,
A unity and wholeness within.

All life energy has to be united,
Because now energy is divided,
Fragmented and scattered everywhere,
In hundreds of conflicting drives and desires.

The fragmented mind is unable to sustain
The whole force of Life energy.
The purpose of yoga is to unite
The scattered and restless mind activity.

Can we discover the totality of being,
The wholeness of energy within?
The yogi is one who is unfragmented,
Contented and fully centered within.

Yoga is a way of cohesion--
A means to unite the fragmented Life energy.
But mostly we keep the mind and body busy
Working on physical fitness alone.

You are concerned about health,
Disease, fatigue and tension.
So you use yoga for health and relaxation only.
You never attempt to go beyond that.

Can you look at your mind
To find out how it works
Through its isolated divisions
And fragmented perceptions?

Mere seriousness is not enough.
It can make one narrow,
Can condense and contract the vision.
Be aware of such exclusion.

The mechanistic mind with its strong habits
Is not interested in anything but itself.
Continuity of the status quo at any cost
Is its vested interest and objective.

To be sensitive, open and intelligent is essential.
Not merely to be focused and serious.
A yogi is one who is attentively open,
Meeting life intelligently, without a barrier.

See, through attentive watchfulness,
How cleverly and subtly
The mind obscures and denies
The wholeness of life energy.

In meditative attention, you bring to an end
The perpetual thrust of the mechanism of mind.
In aloof perception, thought is dissolved
And only observation remains.

In alert and attentive perception,
Energy dissipation is arrested.
The energy is gathered within
To stay whole, tranquil and serene.

Do you know the state of silence,
The tranquil energy of your inner space?
How sensitive and effervescent silence is,
How dynamic and creative that state is.

Peace is not just absence of friction.
Quietude is not mere mental hibernation.
Silence is not passive existence,
Nor an interval between two thoughts.

Silence is sensitive and dynamic,
A movement of pure energy within,
Attentively awaiting in inner space
To greet the dawn of divine grace.

To watch within the energy field
Aloofly, without any choice,
To observe the play of mind without intention,
Is the right way of meditation.

Meditation is not
A pursuit of glorified thought,
Or a flight of wishful will,
Nor an enforced time to be still.

Meditation is choiceless perception--
Uninvolved, all-around attention,
Undiluted by thoughts and emotions,
Unlimited by technique and tradition.

Without any goal in mind
Or desire to change in time,
Remain in watchful alertness.
Be a stranger, an aloof witness.

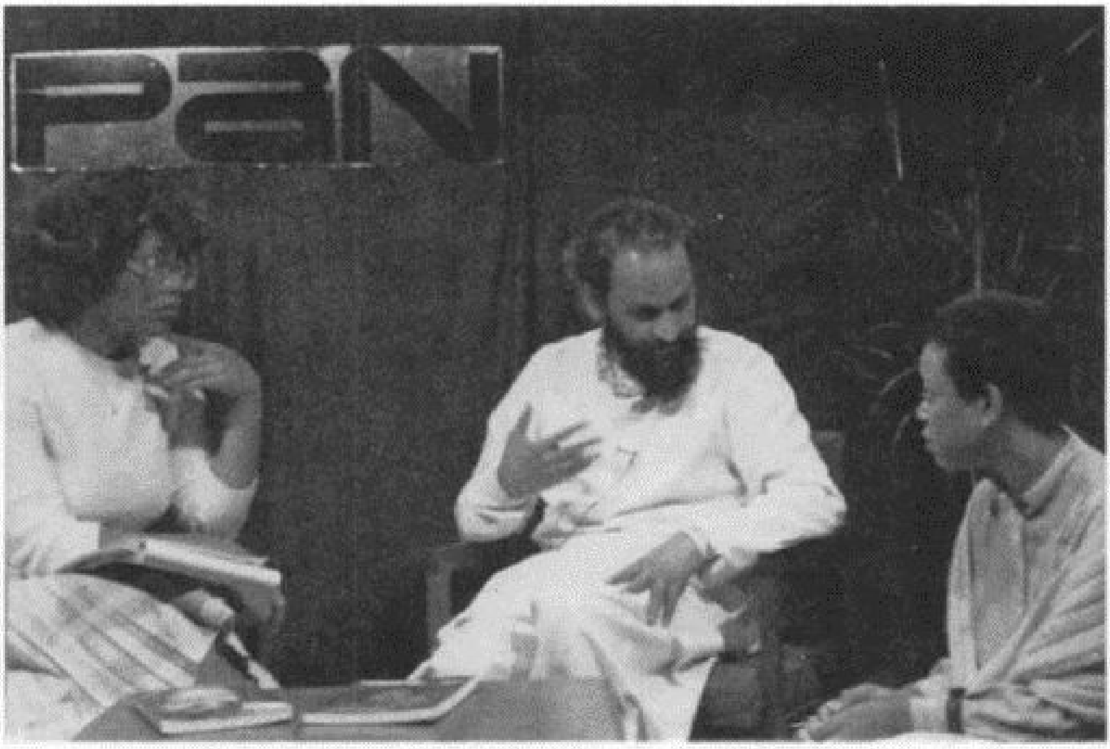
In silence of the senses
And tranquility within,
You discover the mystery
Of the total being.

The totality of inner being
Is a new-dimensional experience,
A discovery of new existence,
The transformation and fulfillment.

The true yogi is one
Who lives in absolute freedom.
Beyond time and tradition,
Rooted in his internal kingdom.

I could see that my words were sinking in and having their effect. These yoga teachers were very sober, open people, unlike the scholarly psychologists who liked to have a debate on everything and confronted me with counter-arguments and conflicting theories. All of them left that weekend with a deeper sense of satisfaction and higher awareness of what are true yoga and meditation.

After giving a radio talk and interview in California



An interview on T.V. channel PAN in Virginia responsibility to Life. Otherwise you will lose this momentum by just indulging in your own self. Is such self-indulgence freedom?

"Your first bondage is you, yourself. Inside you is the dictator, not in the society outside. It is possible to liberate yourself from the bondage of your own self, the mind, the habits, compulsions and conditioning. Perhaps then you will discover the real fragrance of life. You will be a free bird to fly across the frontiers. There in the flight beyond the horizon into the boundless space of Life, you don't have to struggle or fight".

In this way I talked to them seriously about true freedom and their slavery. But the hippies showed more interest in their loud music, food, aromas and painted faces, dancing and lounging around half-naked. They exhibited little seriousness or interest in deeper reality. There were a few who listened to me intently and promised to attend my talks in the San Francisco area. But the day was mostly all a play of senses and emotions.

Where have the hippies and their counterculture gone now? They have basically vanished, because their shallow perceptions and goals were founded on a life of pleasure and excitement only. They based their revolt on indulgence, tied to the mind's cravings, so it could not last. Unless you relate your freedom with the inner spirit, with the real Life energy, your quest won't take you very far.

While staying in Marin County, north of San Francisco, I frequently met with people who came to me with their questions and problems. Bob Hutchins continued to be especially encouraging to me, saying how this message should reach more people, not just the few who were hearing me in the Bay Area and Northern California. He said I should write a book so that this approach could be read by a wide audience. He had made a generous donation so that I could go various places giving talks, and now he repeatedly encouraged me to prepare a book.

The thought of writing a book had never occurred to me, and making a book seemed full of obstacles and challenges. But he would not let go of the idea, and other people began mentioning it as well. Eventually it took root in me as a possibility. Maybe this would be an interesting opportunity to try something completely new. How would I tackle such a project?

there was no memory of the past, everything would be an experience in the present. The time frame would be automatically dissolved. There would be no room for duality either. It is memory that has created the images of 'I' and 'they' which appear to be separate entities. With an understanding of the pseudo nature of the 'I', the image of 'they' as separate entities will also be dissolved. 'I' and 'they' will then be mere facts in existence – like a tree or a cloud – without any psychological coloring.

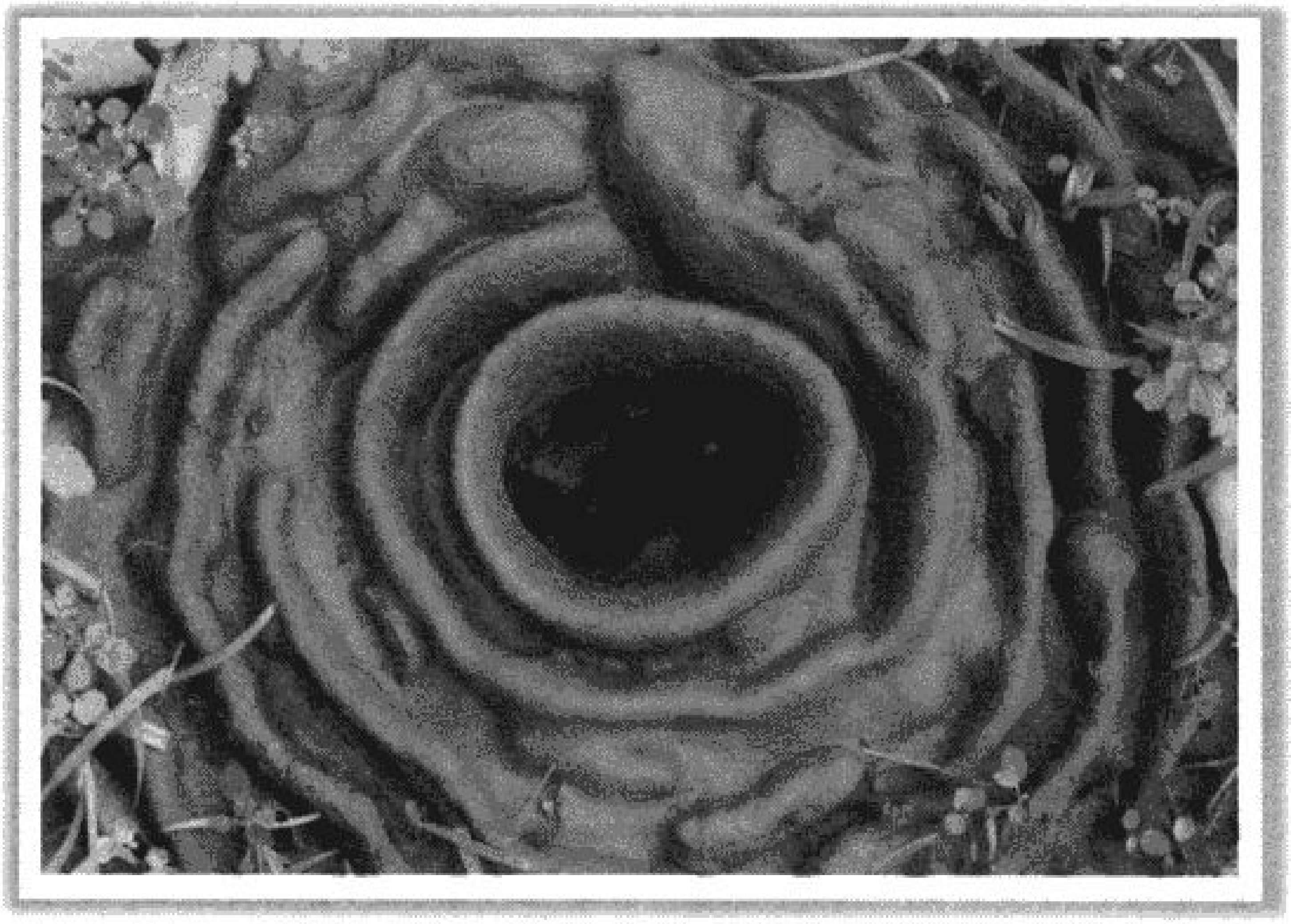
Basically, memory-mind has fragmented human consciousness. This is the reason why separation or duality is experienced. It is possible to dissolve this subtle screen of duality, this optical illusion, this delusion of separation in order to discover the reality and wholeness of existence.

Separation is created by the personalized mind, and this conditioned consciousness makes the human being a prisoner of himself. Man is divorced from the whole of creation because of his self-centered mind. He sees himself as a separate entity from the rest, in his own thoughts and feelings. A human being lives life in exclusion, restricted to personal desires and goals, with affection for only a few individuals around him. Mankind is missing so much! Lost are the fragrance and beauty of oneness with Nature – that exalted feeling of kinship with the whole of creation.

Even in daily living – in the mundane activities of mortal man – one can see and feel the play of creativity, the Immortal. An opening flower, a fruit-bearing tree, a surging cloud or trickling brook all carry with them something of a timeless quality, the play of Life energy pulsating. Insects like ants, termites and bees display a very unique capacity to manage their own affairs. Each one works with some instinctive understanding, sharing the responsibility of the whole group. There seems to be a kind of group consciousness working in the members of the entire colony.

Ants have no developed brain and nervous system. Yet they display an unimaginable degree of understanding and co-ordination in building a structure for their safe dwelling. How does this tiny creature communicate, co-operate and construct such a marvelous fortress-like shelter? It is surely an architectural marvel that protects ants from rain and storm and from all the enemies of the colony. How comfortable, warm and cozy they make it for their young ones!

Breeding and nursing of a new generation goes on unhindered inside this safe shelter.

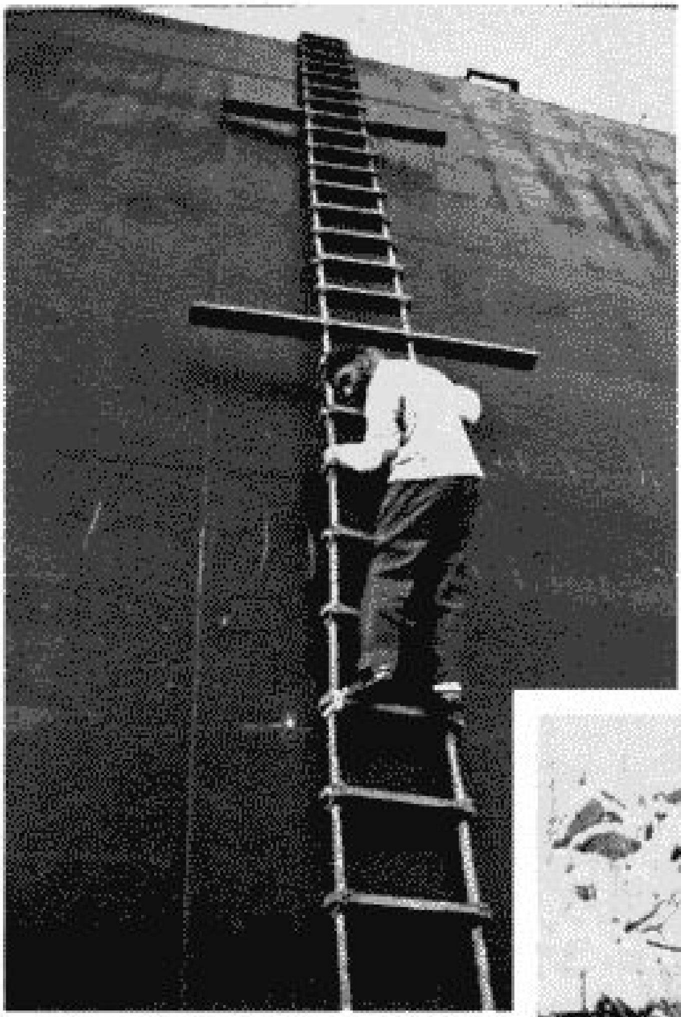


Intellect or instinct!

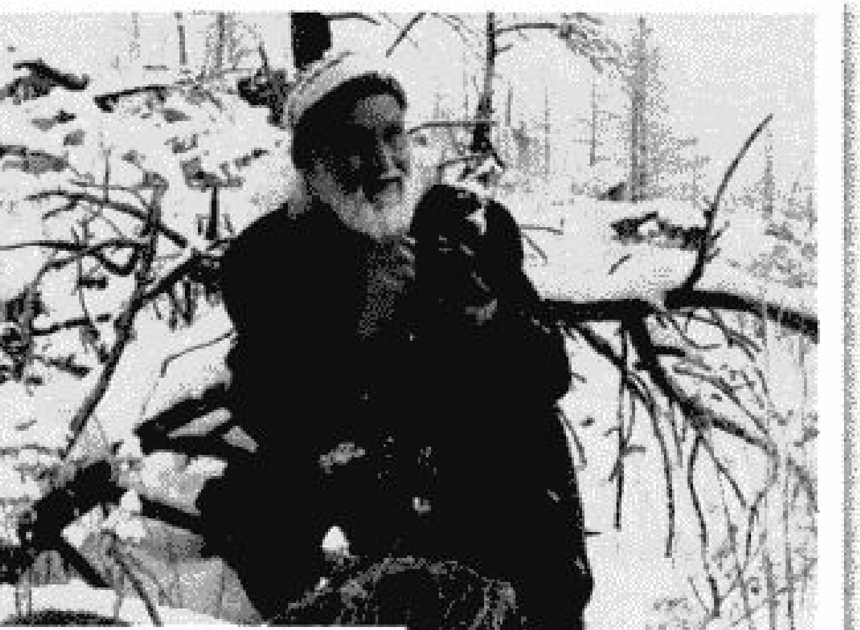
Even the tiny ants have complete know-how
To build a beautiful fortress for safe-dwelling.
Where did they learn this skill
Of masonry and architectural designing?

Likewise, how do migratory birds manage to fly across continents every year, to escape the rigors of freezing winters?

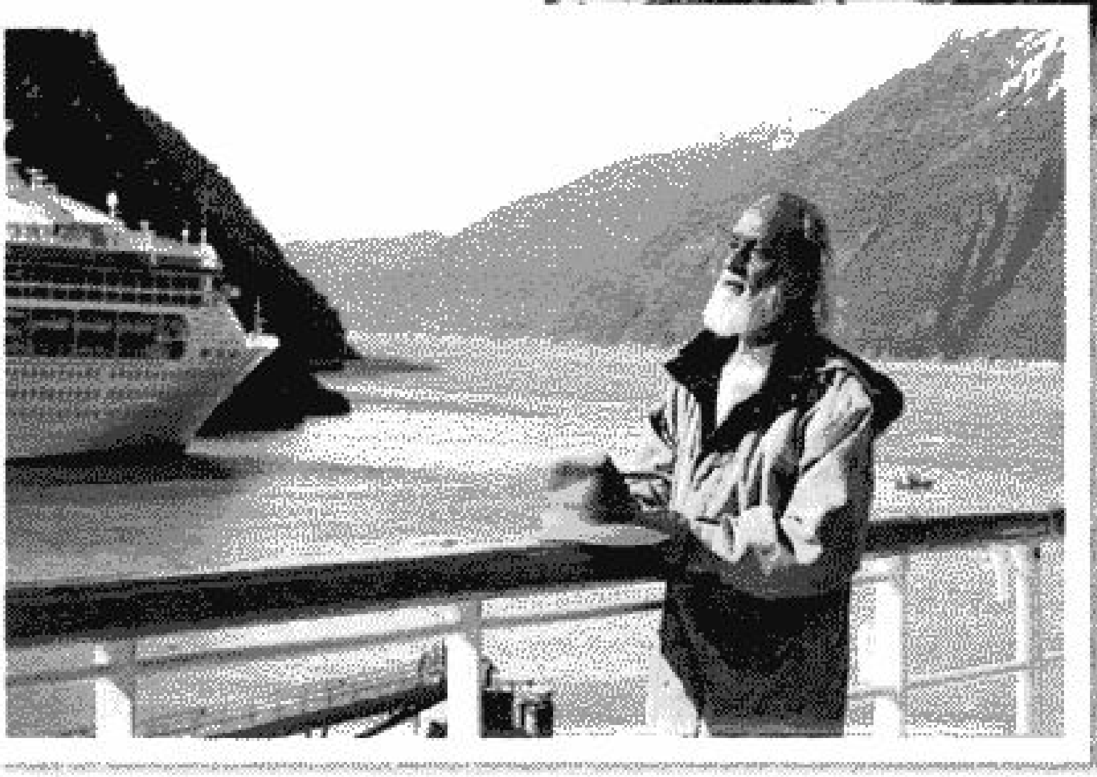
It is easy to throw out a word like instinct and then just forget about it. But how does this instinct work? From where does it originate? How is instinct different from intellect? What is the relationship between intellect and intelligence? Is this instinct the beginning of intelligence? Is intelligence heading towards intuition? Words are hardly useful to understand and experience the truth. Nevertheless, through its uniqueness, Nature lends a touch of eternity to the mundane and mortal.



Negotiating the climb
on a cargo ship
in rough and windy weather



A passion for
photography
in Boulder



Nearing the North Pole:
Cruise to Alaska

Creative universal energy pulsates and pervades the whole of creation with its all-encompassing presence. This creative, intelligent energy of Life is present everywhere, spilling over man, earth and beyond. But the human brain, in fact the consciousness of man as a whole, is not developed enough to capture this subtle wavelength.

The real challenge for the civilized human being is to discover a new apparatus that can capture this non-thought and non-verbal intelligence. With the discovery of this new apparatus, a higher dimension of intuitive energy will dawn upon man.

Universal intelligence is trying to overcome earthly ignorance. The sacred is attempting to touch the mundane. The subtle is trying to override the crude. The timeless is trying to negate time.

But the rigidity of matter and man holds itself firmly and stubbornly. In a way, the spirit remains helpless before matter. The inner is sidetracked by the outer.

Unless the mind, which is matter, begins to see its own limitations and starts to open and yield to the influences of the subtle and sublime, there is no way out of this self-created impasse. There can be no real move toward the boundless and universal.

Art, whether photography or some other medium, is one means of taking man from the crude to the subtle and to the refined. The artist is one who moves from rigid concept to lucid creation, from intellect to intuition. With this move in his consciousness, an artist travels from the cage of his personality toward boundless freedom. The ultimate challenge is to discover one's kinship with the universe, one's fundamental relationship with the whole of creation.

The human being is small and insignificant in the context of this boundless universe! And yet man is very intimately connected with the vastness of creation. He is essentially part of a stupendous cosmic process. Man is indeed related to the primordial fireball, the nebula that exploded in the boundless space billions of years ago.

Scientific evidence has established that every atom of man's body has a whole energy acts upon itself to explode the old structure of the crystallized mind.

This is the moment of breakthrough. In this revolutionary action the old, time-bound structure of the ego/me is shattered, giving the experience of a new-dimensional energy flow. This is the true re-birth of a human being. It is the blessing and the grace of the Causeless Creation.

This celebration is the outcome of the alchemy of Life, an act of the unknown. It is a spiritual opening, a turn toward new-dimensional existence.

When one begins to perceive and feel the bondage of the mind very clearly, without any reservation, this sets in motion a counter-force in consciousness. This counter-force is a catalyst for change, for the radical revolution. This is a natural unfoldment toward the final flowering of the human mind.

In all types of matter particles there are corresponding anti-matter particles. When the matter particles collide with the anti-matter particles, both are destroyed, leaving only energy.

In true meditation – which is free from the frame of technique and tradition, and carries all-around awareness to all that is within and without – the alchemy of transformation begins. There is an important change in the energy particles when attentive awareness is going totally inside. You become internally silent and free from any outward movement, and energy is actively pulsating only within.

When the energy particles of unbiased perception of the present collide with the particles of the past memory-mind, the annihilation of this psychological memory structure occurs. In this annihilation the perceiver and the past memory-mind are both negated. Awareness and the content of awareness are both annihilated, and there remains only energy.

This energy, being of a different dimension, will free us from the bondage of thought, which is time. It is elemental energy – that which is impersonal, spontaneous and intuitive. It functions in absolute freedom, beyond the realm of time and tradition. This timeless energy is pure Intelligence, the wisdom of Life, the Divine.

Eminent scientists working in the field of particle physics and genetic engineering also seem to have reached the conclusion that there exists an energy of a higher frequency which is beyond the dimensions of time and space and which behaves in mysterious ways.

True meditation opens up the possibility of entering this sphere of the mysterious, the unknown, the timeless, which may be eternal as well. Intense sensitivity is the outcome of thought-free inward pondering. It is an inward movement of exalted innocence – a movement of thinking without thought as well as feeling without emotional drive.

When this movement is free from the reflections of any reference to the past, it is detached from the shadow of Time. By entering deeper into one's own inner space, quite inadvertently, one would arrive at a point where one can get the first insight to behold the dawn of the Timeless. The rigidity of thought is then loosened; thought comes into No man's Land – a state of not-knowing, which is complete innocence.

Such a state of intense sensitivity loosens the hold of the genetic code. This prepares the ground for the eventual rushing in of the mysterious Life energy, which operates with its own Intelligence, without reference to the brain or nervous system.

At the moment of breakthrough, the mysterious Life energy explodes within and shatters the very foundation of one's personality, along with one's well-organized, conditioned memory-mind. The dawn of freedom is experienced!

The liberated man is completely freed from the clutches of the genome and lives from moment to moment, with a sense of being complete, contented, fully attuned and alive. He is also extremely creative, being governed by intuitive intelligence rather than bound by one's conditioning or genetic code. This is a great achievement for man on earth, a historical landmark in the unfoldment of creative intelligence in the human being. Here lies the beauty, mystery and alchemy of Nature. Here also lies the hope and assurance of the liberation of human beings.

Yet, this stage is only the right beginning, like opening a door to something new. The door is open, and you are experiencing that other energy flow. The mold of mind has been broken, but even then one has to guard that new opening by remaining vigilant and totally faithful to it. Here is the need for, that classical state of 'shraddha' or faith. *Faith is not a wishful mental choice of anything, either inside or outside. Faith is a total state in itself. It is anonymity with humility and inwardness, untouched by the desiring mind.*

After the breakthrough, there is a possibility that the surrounding environmental influences will affect this new opening. They can overshadow and engulf it again, just as a few dark clouds can subdue and block the light of the mighty sun. The whole basin of ego-mind has to become empty and cleaned of the residue gathered by the personality during its centuries of travel.

So even after the door has been opened, the old habits do linger on. The mind, with its ingrained self-interest, very cleverly tries to turn every new experience into an idea.

Truth is destroyed by making an idea of it. Thought embalms the Truth in time to keep it dead. This way the intellect can use Truth easily and conveniently whenever needed – to fulfill the vested interests of the ego. Be aware of the idea, the thought or concept. Thought is the slayer of Truth. Memory is a barrier to the Timeless.

Thus one needs to go deeper, to intensify the awareness, to remain faithful to that new beginning. The social mind and strong collective environmental pressures are always there. Those have the capacity to influence, to cast their own dark shadow, to take over again. You are open to a new freedom, yet the past is always lingering around to overcome the present. This, too, is a Law of Nature.

So one has to be vigilant and very aware even at this stage. *Constant vigilance is the price of freedom. This new opening is not something that is permanent once it takes place. Life is a constant movement, a momentum of moments. One needs to be awake at every moment, which deepens one's own faith.*

Faith depends on what depth one has entered into oneself. One can play on the shore with the ocean water, or enter further into it to experience the full depth, the immensity. It is the depth that helps one loosen the grip of the foothold and thus become free from one's own identity. Then one is carried aloft by the celestial current beyond the horizon to witness the panorama of unbounded space – the infinity.

Before that, the possibility is still there that the ego-mind will restructure itself and come back very subtly in a new guise. Some seekers see the glimpse through the door, but then they start glorifying the door, worshipping the light, singing songs about it. This can and does happen. The past is still there; the influences are all around. Any indulgence in glorificatory thought and idea about anyone or anything is a subtle and dangerous backward step. It implies that you are not yet completely free of mind.

The explosion almost completely breaks the mold, but the mold has the capacity to remake itself. That is why constant awareness is necessary. The mold of ego/mind has come into being through centuries and has created its own powerful vested interest. The mind mechanism, by utilizing all of the energy of Life, has rooted itself firmly. It does not let one move easily beyond itself towards divinity.

All religions and great teachers have come to show precisely this mystery of Life. But the mystery has been taken over by the mind, making a philosophy and religion, an idea or story of it, and using the very seeking of liberation as a means for its own continuity.

Even after this breakthrough, simplicity and austerity along with humility are essential, and deepening of the alert watchfulness is crucial. The explosion does bring a new order. It shatters the shell of the ego, the mind, and gives the experience of freedom and peace. But that freedom and peace have to unfold and flower forth to touch the source of one's own inner being – the enormity of Life, the Divinity.

So there is not only the explosion but the deepening beyond it as well. You still have to let go of the foothold, to enter into the deeper eternal waters of Life. Then you become the water, the ocean, that vastness itself, in the flow of the Timeless. The 'I' as center merges into the circumference, which is limitless. You as a separate